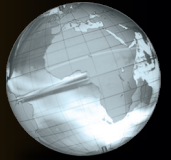


GLOBAL
EDITION



Excellence in Business Communication

FOURTEENTH EDITION

John V. Thill • Courtland L. Bovée



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EDITION

GLOBAL EDITION

Excellence in Business Communication

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Preface

New to This Edition

Now in its 14th edition, *Excellence in Business Communication* continues to set new standards for currency and innovation with another thorough revision and update. Here are the highlights of this new edition.

THE FACES AND VOICES OF CONTEMPORARY BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

The past few years have witnessed a long-overdue reckoning with bias in the workplace, and business communication is at the heart of this discussion. The 14th edition offers comprehensive coverage of communication's role in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. As a key part of this, Chapter 4 was completely overhauled to help students understand the many dimensions of diversity and the issues that affect today's workplaces. Please refer to the Chapter 4 entry in the table that follows for a complete list of the new topic coverage.

The text is also now aligned with major style guides in using the singular *they* to avoid exclusionary references to nonbinary persons. Updated coverage in Chapter 6 helps students understand this issue and offers advice on using singular and plural constructions to ensure inclusive language and smooth phrasing.

To support the new emphasis on culturally competent communication, every aspect of the text has been reconsidered and updated to reflect the rich diversity of today's workforces and stakeholder communities. This effort ranged from replacing nearly the entire selection of photos and replacing nearly half the chapter-opening vignettes down to details such as updating the publication titles and authors represented in sample citation entries in Appendix B.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR THE NEW WORLD OF WORK

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to remote work, and virtual and hybrid work environments are now the norm for millions of employees. The 14th edition prepares students with new coverage of online meetings, online collaboration, and etiquette in the virtual workplace.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN INTELLIGENT COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Thill and Bovée have long been the market leaders in coverage of communication technology, having moved the field forward with digital communication, social media, mobile communication, and, most recently, the artificial intelligence tools that we refer to as *intelligent communication technology*. The 14th edition expands the coverage of these exciting innovations with new discussions of AI-generated deepfake videos, smart social media listening tools, and other topics.

EXTENSIVE CONTENT ENHANCEMENTS

In addition to those developments, the 14th edition features these major improvements:

- **New “On the Job” vignette/simulation pairs.** These chapter-opening vignettes and end-of-chapter simulations show students how professionals apply the same skills they are reading about in the chapter. This edition features eight new “On the Job” features.

- **More than 350 new citations.** Extensive research was undertaken to ensure up-to-date coverage of diversity, innovative technology usage, and contemporary business practices.
- **More than 70 new images and nearly 50 rebuilt or revised figures.** The visual aspects of the text were thoroughly revised for currency, diverse representation, student interest, and image quality. The numerous PowerPoint slides were redesigned for a fresh, contemporary look, and new higher-resolution screenshots make email messages and other model documents easier to read. The long sample report in Chapter 13 is all new and presented in an eye-catching look that reflects today's business style. This edition has nearly 80 annotated model documents, including 16 before/after pairs that show students the specific details of how messages can be improved. Well over 100 of the photos and figures reflect the use of contemporary communication technology.
- **More practice opportunities for basic English skills.** The Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage exercises at the end of every chapter have been expanded with new opportunities for students who can benefit from additional practice with writing and editing fundamentals. Together with a variety of other new questions, activities, and cases, the 14th edition has more than 300 new student assessments.

CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER ENHANCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Dozens of chapter sections are new, updated, or substantially revised to reflect the latest research and practices in business communication. Here are the most significant changes and improvements, organized by learning objective:

Chapter 1: Professional Communication in a Digital, Social, Mobile World	LO5 Committing to Ethical and Legal Communication: Extensive updates and additions; the forms of unethical communication have been expanded from three to five (adding <i>Failing to Consider Negative Consequences</i> and <i>Violating Privacy</i>) New highlight box: <i>Intelligent Communication Technology: Are You For Real?</i> on the problem of deepfake video 13 new images, including 10 new images in the <i>Empowering Communicators with Intelligent Communication Technology</i> special feature
Chapter 2: Interpersonal Communication Skills	LO2 Improving Your Nonverbal Communication Skills: Revised coverage of personal appearance to reflect a more inclusive viewpoint on dress and grooming Figure 2.1 The Face as a Nonverbal Communicator: Replaces a figure that too heavily normalized a particular style of dress and grooming.
Chapter 3: Collaboration and Business Etiquette	New On the Job vignette featuring Zita Smith of Sodexo and her approach to guiding teams during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic LO1 Communicating Effectively in Teams: Numerous updates and new topics that reflect the nature of teamwork in today's hybrid workplaces LO2 Collaborating on Communication Efforts: Extensive new coverage in <i>Tools and Systems for Collaborative Content Development</i> LO3 Making Your Meetings More Productive: Extensive changes throughout to reflect the ubiquity of online meetings, particularly in <i>Preparing for Meetings</i> and <i>Conducting Virtual Meetings</i> LO4 Developing Your Business Etiquette: New section on <i>Virtual Workplace Etiquette</i> ; <i>Business Etiquette in Social Settings</i> updated to reflect post-pandemic norms; previous section on online etiquette retitled to <i>Social Media Etiquette</i> ; telephone and mobile etiquette combined into one section Three new figures: 3.2 Shared Online Workspaces, 3.7 Meeting Management Software, 3.8 Workplace Etiquette

Chapter 4: Communication Challenges in a Diverse, Global Marketplace	This chapter has been substantially revised, and roughly 80 percent of the content is new. Historically, this chapter focused on international communication with cultural topics as a component of that. We've reversed the emphasis in this edition to cover a broader range of diversity topics, and it's now roughly 30 percent international and 70 percent contemporary cultural issues. To keep the focus clear throughout the chapter, we refer to these as the <i>global marketplace</i> when we're discussing international issues and the <i>contemporary workplace</i> when we're focusing on diversity issues in the workplace. New On the Job vignette featuring Siemens AG and the diversity of perspectives, backgrounds, ages, levels of experience, and expertise in its workforce LO1 Understanding the Opportunities and Challenges of Communication in a Diverse World: Updated coverage of international communication and stakeholder demands for more inclusive workplaces; new coverage of implicit bias and tribalism LO2 Developing Cultural Competency: Expanded discussion of cultural competency; new material on intersectionality; all-new section <i>Recognizing the Dynamics of Bias</i>, which covers code-switching, exclusionary behaviors, role incredulity, centering and othering, and the question of privilege LO3 Recognizing Dimensions of Cultural Diversity: Mostly new material, divided into six sections: <i>Race and Ethnicity</i> (all new material) <i>Gender and Sexual Orientation</i> (mostly new material covering Representation and Influence, Communication Style, and LGBTQ+ Representation and Bias) <i>Physical, Emotional, and Cognitive Traits</i> (mostly new) <i>Age</i> (substantially new with more emphasis on ageism and intergenerational relationships, rather than on generational attributes) <i>Religion</i> <i>Education, Economics, and Life Experience</i> (new section that discusses communication influences of socioeconomic status) LO5 Improving Intercultural Communication in the Workplace: Nearly all new, divided into three sections: <i>Practicing Inclusive Leadership</i> <i>Being a Strong Ally</i> <i>Developing Inclusive Communication Habits</i>
Chapter 5: Planning Business Messages	New On the Job vignette featuring Javier Rodriguez of DaVita and his emphasis on using digital communication tools efficiently New figure 5.5 Mind Mapping
Chapter 6: Writing Business Messages	LO1 Adapting to Your Audience: Being Sensitive to Audience Needs: Section on <i>Using Inclusive, Bias-Free Language</i> significantly updated and expanded LO4 Composing Your Message: Choosing Powerful Words: Updated coverage of using singular <i>they/their</i> and expanded with new research about the impact of concrete language choices Three new figures: 6.1 Fostering a Positive Relationship with an Audience, 6.2 Establishing Credibility, and 6.3 Choosing Strong Words

Chapter 7: Completing Business Messages	New On the Job vignette featuring Nadine Chahine of Monotype and her work on an official typeface for the city of Dubai LO5 Proofreading Your Message: Expanded with coverage of using audio read-back as a proofing tool and taking advantage of smart editing plug-ins and other new tools
Chapter 8: Crafting Messages for Digital Channels	LO1 Digital Channels for Business Communication: All new material in <i>Digital and Social Media Options</i> LO2 Social Networking Platforms: Significantly updated and expanded, including <i>Business Communication Uses of Social Platforms:</i> All new material <i>Tips for Successful Communication on Major Social Media Platforms:</i> Major new section with specific advice on using Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, Reddit, Instagram, Snapchat, and Pinterest LO3 Email: New coverage of Smart Compose LO4 Business Messaging: Updates on evolving messaging services such as WhatsApp LO5 Blogging: New material on post types that attract the most readers LO6 Microblogging: Expanded advice for business uses of Twitter New highlight box: <i>Intelligent Communication Technology: Monitoring the Social Media Sphere with Smart Listening Tools</i> Two-page feature Business Communicators Innovating with Social Media: Mostly new content, including all new images Eight new figures: 8.1 Compositional Modes: Narratives, 8.2 Compositional Modes: Tutorials and FAQs, 8.3 TikTok for Business Communication, 8.4 Instagram for Business Communication, 8.5 Professional Email, 8.7 Blogging for Business, 8.8 Customer Support on Twitter, 8.9 Podcasting
Chapter 9: Writing Routine and Positive Messages	LO4 Common Examples of Routine Replies, Routine Messages, and Positive Messages: Streamlined and removed discussion of legal issues New highlight box: <i>Intelligent Communication Technology: Nice Chatting with You</i> New figure 9.6 Announcing Good News
Chapter 10: Writing Negative Messages	New On the Job vignette featuring Rivian CEO RJ Scaringe who was forced to issue an apology after customer outrage over an unexpected price increase
Chapter 11: Writing Persuasive Messages	Updated coverage of Stitch Fix in the On the Job vignette
Chapter 12: Planning Reports and Proposals	LO3 Conducting Secondary Research: Information on online search tools heavily revised Two new figures: 12.8 Online and Mobile Survey Tools, 12.9 Organizing User-Friendly Website Content
Chapter 13: Writing and Completing Reports and Proposals	New On the Job vignette featuring Lowe's CEO Marvin R. Ellison and his use of annual reports to persuade and inform Report Writer's Notebook (long sample report): All-new report using contemporary design Multiple charts and graphs were redesigned for accessibility Four new figures: 13.1 Audience-Friendly Reports, 13.2 Writing and Designing for the Web, 13.9 Data Visualization, 13.13 Solicited Report (for the Message for Analysis 13.6)

Chapter 14: Developing and Delivering Business Presentations	LO2 Developing a Presentation: Significant changes and updates to <i>Getting Your Audience's Attention</i> and <i>Building Your Credibility</i> LO5 Delivering a Presentation: New advice on handling anxiety, using the social media backchannel, and giving presentations online Two new figures: 14.2 Nonlinear Presentations, 14.11 Online Presentations 23 of the 25 PowerPoint slides were redesigned with a fresh, contemporary look
Chapter 15: Building Careers and Writing Résumés	New On the Job vignette featuring Workday CEO Aneel Bhusri and the company's efforts to develop applicant tracking systems that better meet the needs of both candidates and recruiters LO1 Finding the Ideal Opportunity in Today's Job Market: Expanded advice on preparing for a job search; numerous updates to networking advice LO4 Completing Your Résumé: Updated advice on the options for producing print and digital résumés Two new figures: 15.2 Mobile Job-Search Tools, 15.8 Effective LinkedIn Profile
Chapter 16: Applying and Interviewing for Employment	New On the Job vignette featuring the Malaysian Students' Global Alliance and their work as a support group connecting female Malaysian students with women leaders and mentors from various industries LO2 Understanding the Interview Process Updated advice on virtual/video interviews, AI-based evaluation systems, and preemployment testing and background checks LO3 Preparing for a Job Interview Revised advice on presenting a professional image for job interviews with a more inclusive perspective on dress and grooming
Appendix A: Format and Layout of Business Documents	Extensively modified, streamlined, and modernized; major changes include: - New advice on courtesy titles (Mr., Ms., Mx.) to encourage more inclusive communication practices - New advice on complimentary closes with a selection of options for students to choose from - Advice on letter formats vastly simplified to reflect contemporary business practices - Simpler advice on addressing envelopes - Two new sections on report formatting: <i>Running Headers and Footers</i> and <i>Other Design Elements</i> - Two new figures: A.2 Business Letter Templates and A.3 Report Layout Options
Appendix B: Documentation of Report Sources	Updated to reflect the new 7th edition of <i>Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association</i> and the new 9th edition of <i>The MLA Handbook</i> Updated example sources to reflect greater diversity in article titles and authors
Handbook of Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage	Numerous changes and corrections, including updated advice to use the singular <i>they</i> to avoid awkward or exclusionary phrasing

Solving Learning and Teaching Challenges

Communication is the most valuable skill that graduates can bring into the workforce, but it is one of the most challenging to teach. *Excellence in Business Communication* blends timeless fundamentals with modern media skills and contemporary business practices. To help students succeed from their first day on the job, *Excellence in Business Communication* presents the full range of on-the-job skills that today's communicators need, from writing conventional printed reports to using the latest digital, social, mobile, and visual media.



ON THE JOB: COMMUNICATING AT RIVIAN

Backtracking on a Surprise Price Increase

Most young companies can only dream of launching products so hotly anticipated that eager buyers make deposits just to secure a place in line, months or even years before the products will be available. About the only thing that can make it better is a community of enthusiasts who also buy in emotionally and consider themselves part of something bigger than just a commercial transaction. Such was the blissful scenario that electric vehicle (EV) maker Rivian found itself in after announcing its consumer “adventure vehicles,” a pickup truck and an SUV, that wowed critics and everyday drivers alike.

But what if global economics significantly raised the production price of those vehicles before they could be manufactured—but after tens of thousands of eager buyers had paid their deposits based on an understanding of what the price would be? The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global manufacturing and supply chains across industries and raised costs on all kinds of products, including the semiconductors, batteries, and other electronic

Real-Life Skills, Real-Life Perspectives

Each chapter opens with a brief vignette that describes a challenge or opportunity faced by a business professional, emphasizing concepts and valuable skills that students will explore in the chapter. The story from the chapter-opening vignette is picked up again at the end of the chapter in a unique simulation that has students imagine themselves in that company as they face four communication challenges that require them to use their new skills and insights.



ON THE JOB: SOLVING COMMUNICATION DILEMMAS AT RIVIAN

You've joined Rivian as a department manager, and in this role you face the usual range of communication challenges that all managers face. Use what you've learned in this chapter to address the following situations.

1. Another manager stopped by this morning with a request to borrow two of your best employees for a three-week emergency. Under normal conditions, you wouldn't hesitate to help, but your team has its own scheduling challenges to deal with. Plus, this isn't the first time this manager has run into trouble, and you are confident that poor project management is the reason. Which of the following is the most diplomatic way to state your refusal while suggesting that your colleague's management skills need improvement?
 - a. With the commitments I've made, I won't be able to bail you out this time.
 - b. I sympathize with the trouble you've gotten yourself into again, I really do, but the commitments I've made on my own projects prevent me from releasing any employees for temporary assignments.
 - c. The commitments I've made won't allow me to release any staff for temporary assignments. However, would you like to meet to discuss the techniques I've found useful for managing project workloads?
 - d. Instead of shifting resources around as usual, why don't we meet to discuss some new strategies for staffing and project management?
2. Employees from your department are occasionally assigned to cross-functional teams with people from other departments for various projects. As in all other professional relationships, even competent professionals can start to rub each other the wrong way at a personal level, which can corrode working relationships over time. Unfortunately, that has happened with one of your best staff members. Geri Lamb is widely admired for her skills, but the team leader of the customer insights team she joined six months ago has asked you to replace her with someone else. Although you'd prefer to tell Lamb in person, schedule conflicts dictate that you send her an

Detailed Opportunities to Learn by Example

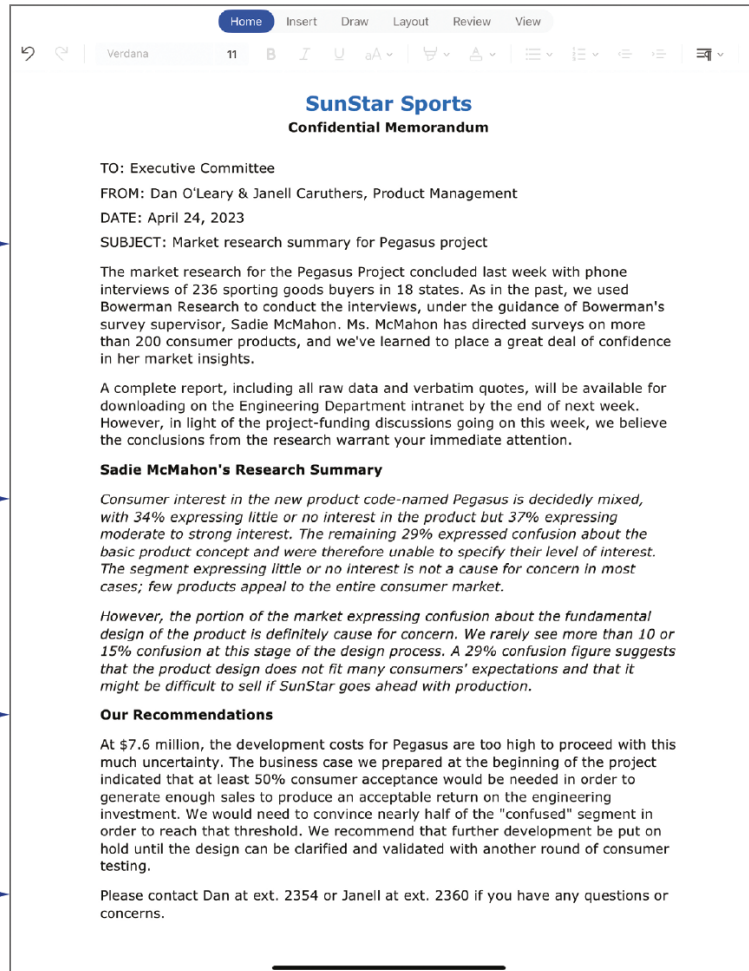
Annotated model documents are perhaps the most important feature of a business communication text, and *Excellence in Business Communication* is packed with a range of carefully chosen examples from real companies and original material created to illustrate specific concepts.

(a) This neutral subject line doesn't try to sell the conclusion before readers have the opportunity to review the evidence for themselves.

(c) By providing the complete text of the researcher's summary, the memo allows readers to reach their own conclusions about what she wrote.

(e) The writers are careful to separate the researcher's observations and opinions from their own, even to the point of grouping them under separate subheadings.

(g) The close invites further discussion of the situation, without assuming agreement of the writers' conclusions.



(b) Rather than hard-selling a conclusion that isn't even true, this opening offers a quick overview of the research and emphasizes the experience of the researcher. In the second paragraph, the writers continue by offering full disclosure of all background information related to the research project.

(d) The numbers here show how the original memo skewed the results. Just because one-third had no interest in the product does not mean two-thirds did. Moreover, the second paragraph from the researcher clearly indicates that she is concerned about the product's viability in the marketplace—a critical point completely missing in the original memo.

(f) The recommendation states clearly and objectively that the project probably will not live up to original hopes.

Figure 1.10 Ethical Communication

This version of the memo from Figure 1.9 presents the evidence in a more honest and ethical manner.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The 14th edition adds value for students in several unique ways with additional resources they can use outside the course:

- **Build Your Career** activities help students create their employment-communication packages throughout the course, so they're ready to apply for jobs by the end of the course.
- **Apply Your Skills Now** highlight boxes help students apply their newly developing communication skills in other classes and in their personal lives.
- **Five-Minute Guides** serve as handy reminders of the steps needed to accomplish a variety of fundamental communication tasks, from resolving workplace conflict to writing business email to planning reports and presentations.

COMPOSITIONAL MODES FOR DIGITAL MEDIA

As you practice using digital media in this course, focus on the overall principles of social communication and the fundamentals of effective writing rather than on the specific details of any one medium or system.² Fortunately, the basic communication skills you will need transfer easily from one system to another.

Successful communication using digital media requires adapting your writing approach to match the medium, the situation, the message, and the audience. At various times, you will find yourself using one of nine *compositional modes* for digital media:

- **Conversations.** Although they take place via writing, some forms of digital communication function more like real-time conversations than the sharing of written documents. Much of Chapter 2's advice on conversations applies to these exchanges, and the section on business messaging in this chapter explores this important communication format.
- **Comments and critiques.** One of the most powerful aspects of social media is the opportunity for people to express opinions and provide feedback, whether it's leaving comments on a blog post or reviewing products on an e-commerce site. Sharing helpful tips and insightful commentary is also a great way to build your personal brand. To be an effective commenter, focus on short chunks of information that a broad spectrum of other people will find helpful. And even if you are offering criticism, keep it constructive. Angry rants and insults won't help anyone, and they brand you as unprofessional.
- **Orientations.** The ability to help people find their way through an unfamiliar system or subject is a valuable writing skill and a talent that readers greatly appreciate. Unlike summaries (see next item), orientations don't give away the key points in the collection of information, but rather tell readers where to find those points. Writing effective orientations can be a delicate balancing act because you need to know the material well enough to guide others through it while being able to step back and view it from the inexperienced perspective of a "newbie."
- **Summaries.** At the beginning of an article or web page, a summary functions as a miniature version of the material, giving readers all the key points while skipping over details. At the end of an article or web page, a summary functions as a review, reminding readers of the key points they've just read.
- **Reference materials.** One of the greatest benefits of the internet is the access it can provide to vast quantities of reference materials—numerical or textual information

Original Coverage

Going beyond covering the tried-and-true, Thill and Bovée make unique contributions to the pedagogy and practice of business communication, such as the nine compositional modes required to succeed with digital and social media.

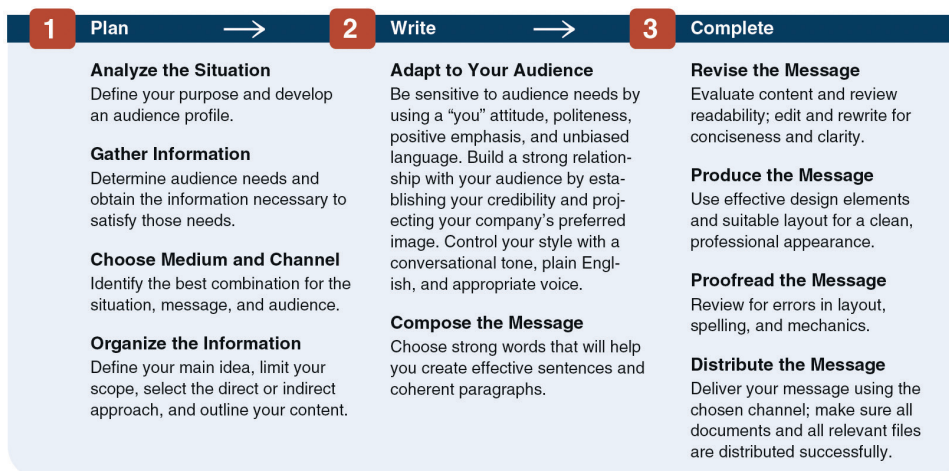


Figure 5.1 The Three-Step Writing Process

This three-step process will help you create more effective messages in any medium. As you get more practice with the process, it will become easier and more automatic.

Sources: Kevin J. Harty and John Keenan, *Writing for Business and Industry: Process and Product* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 3–4; Richard Hatch, *Business Writing* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1983), 88–89; Richard Hatch, *Business Communication Theory and Technique* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1983), 74–75; Center for Humanities, *Writing as a Process: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Mount Kisco, NY: Center for Humanities, 1987); Michael L. Keene, *Effective Professional Writing* (New York: D. C. Heath, 1987), 28–34.

Reducing Stress and Uncertainty for Students

Students sometimes flounder when faced with unfamiliar or difficult writing challenges because they don't know how to move a project forward. By following the proven three-step process described in *Excellence in Business Communication*, they never have to feel lost or waste time figuring out what to do next.

Unmatched Resources from the Authors

No other textbook comes close to offering the valuable resources the authors provide to instructors—many of which are available exclusively to Thill and Bovée adopters:

- Sponsored instructor communities on LinkedIn and Facebook with nearly 4,000 members
- Tips and techniques in Bovée and Thill's Business Communication Blog and Twitter feed
- The Bovée & Thill channel on YouTube
- Videos and PowerPoint presentations on SlideShare
- Hundreds of infographics, videos, articles, podcasts, and PowerPoints in the Business Communication Pictorial Gallery on Pinterest
- The Ultimate Guide to Resources for Teaching Business Communication
- Curated magazines for business communication on Scoop.it

Links to all these services and resources can be found at blog.businesscommunicationnetwork.com/resources.

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Back to Basics: Giving Constructive Feedback

This is the sixth post in our series on the fundamentals of business communication, from what it means and why it matters to tips and techniques for success. We'll present the information in ways that you can share directly with your students, and we hope this information will enhance your lectures and class discussions.

With a new school year underway, you probably have plans for collaborative writing and presentation projects for your students. Any time a student is asked to assess a teammate's creative output (formally or informally) is a great opportunity to practice the essential skill of giving constructive feedback.

Here are eight tips for providing feedback that is helpful and that maintains a positive working relationship:

1. **Think through your suggested changes carefully.** In business, documents and presentations often illustrate complex relationships between ideas. Isolated and superficial edits that don't grasp the big picture message or the intricate details can do more harm than good.
2. **Discuss improvements rather than flaws.** Instead of saying "this is confusing," for instance, explain how the writing can be improved to make it clearer.
3. **Focus on controllable actions.** The writer may not have control over every variable that affects the quality of the message, so focus on those aspects the writer can control.
4. **Be specific.** Comments such as "I don't get this" or "Make this clearer" don't give the writer much direction.
5. **Keep feedback impersonal.** Focus comments on the message, not on the person who created it.
6. **Verify understanding.** If in doubt, ask for confirmation from the recipient to make sure the person understands your feedback.
7. **Time your feedback carefully.** Respond in a timely fashion so the writer has sufficient time to implement the changes you suggest.
8. **Highlight any limitations your feedback may have.** If you didn't have time to give the document a thorough edit, or if you're not an expert in some aspect of the content, let the writer know so that your comments can be implemented appropriately.

Business Communication Today
15th Edition

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John V. Thill/Courtland L. Bovée

Developing Employability Skills

In addition to helping students develop a full range of communication skills, *Excellence in Business Communication* will enhance a wide range of other skills that experts say are vital for success in the 21st-century workplace:

- **Critical thinking.** In many assignments and activities, students need to define and solve problems and make decisions or form judgments.
- **Collaboration.** Team-skills assignments provide multiple opportunities to work with classmates on reports, presentations, and other projects.
- **Knowledge application and analysis.** From the basic communication process to strategies for specific message types, students will learn a variety of concepts and apply that knowledge to a wide range of challenges.
- **Business ethics and social responsibility.** Ethical choices are stressed from the beginning of the book, and multiple projects encourage students to be mindful of the ethical implications that they could encounter in similar projects on the job.
- **Information technology skills.** Projects and activities in every chapter help students build skills with technology, including document preparation tools, online communication services, presentation software, and messaging systems.
- **Data literacy.** Report projects in particular present opportunities to fine-tune data literacy skills, including the ability to access, assess, interpret, manipulate, summarize, and communicate data.

Exercises

Each activity is labeled according to the primary skill or skills you will need to use. To review relevant chapter content, you can refer to the indicated Learning Objective. In some instances, supporting information will be found in another chapter, as indicated.

- 3-8. Collaboration: Working in Teams; Media Skills: Shared Workspace [LO-1], [LO-2]** The corporate office, marketing, and finance departments of your company are scattered across three locations in the city. It is necessary to motivate and engage employees in an information exchange. Each department is requested to form a team and conduct a search on the internet to find ways people can be motivated. Tabulate the findings of each team, and narrow the list down to the 10 most popular motivational employee engagement activities that can be further discussed with the teams. Collaborate in a shared workspace with these departments on the details of these 10 activities.

- 3-9. Collaboration: Collaborating on Writing Projects; Media Skills: Blogging [LO-2]** In this project, you will conduct research on your own and then merge your results with those of the rest of your team. Search Twitter for messages on the subject of workplace safety. Compile at least five general safety tips that apply to any office setting, and then meet with your team to select the five best tips from all those the team has collected. Collaborate on a blog post that lists the team's top five tips.

Instructor Teaching Resources

The 14th edition is also accompanied with the following teaching resources:

Supplements available to instructors at http://www.pearson.com/	Features of the Supplement
Instructor's Manual authored by George Dovel and Susan Schanne	• Chapter overview • Chapter outline • Lecture notes organized by learning objective, with class discussion questions • Answers to highlight box questions • Answers to Apply Your Knowledge questions • Answers to Practice Your Skills activities
Test Bank authored by Dr. Andrew Lingwall from Pennsylvania Western University-Clarion	• 1,660 multiple-choice, true/false, and essay questions • Answer explanations • Keyed by learning objective • Classified according to difficulty level • Classified according to learning modality: conceptual, application, critical thinking, or synthesis • Learning outcomes identified • AACSB learning standard identified (Written and Oral Communication, Ethical Understanding and Reasoning, Analytical Thinking, Interpersonal Relations and Teamwork, Diverse and Multicultural Work Environments, Reflective Thinking, Application of Knowledge, and Integration of Real-world Business Experiences)
Computerized TestGen	TestGen allows instructors to • customize, save, and generate classroom tests. • edit, add, or delete questions from the Test Item Files. • analyze test results. • organize a database of tests and student results.
PowerPoints authored by Dr. Andrew Lingwall from Pennsylvania Western University-Clarion	Slides include all the graphs, tables, and equations in the textbook. PowerPoints meet accessibility standards for students with disabilities. Features include: • Keyboard and screen reader access • Alternative text for images • High contrast between background and foreground colors

Cases

For all cases, feel free to use your creativity to make up any details you need in order to craft effective messages.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SKILLS

8-44. Media Skills: Social Networking; Compositional Modes: Summaries [LO-2] Microsoft, Centene, Target, Gap, and Biogen are among the companies recognized by *Fortune* magazine as among the best large employers for supporting diverse workforces.⁴⁵

Your task: Choose one of these companies and visit its website to learn more about its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. Write a 100- to 150-word summary that could be published on the company's social media accounts to encourage potential employees who want to work at a firm that values a diverse workforce.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SKILLS

8-45. Media Skills: Social Networking; Online Etiquette [LO-2], Chapter 3 Employees who take pride in their work are a practically priceless resource for any business. However, pride can sometimes manifest itself in negative ways when employees come under criticism, and public criticism is a fact of life in social media. Imagine that your company has recently experienced a rash of product quality problems, and these problems have generated some unpleasant and occasionally unfair criticism on a variety of social media sites. Someone even set up a Facebook page specifically to give customers a place to vent their frustrations.

have a serious training issue on your hands. Write a post for the internal company blog that advises employees on how to respond appropriately when they are representing the company online. Use your imagination to make up any details you need.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SKILLS / TEAM SKILLS

8-46. Media Skills: Social Networking; Collaboration: Team Projects [LO-2], Chapter 3 Social media can be a great way to, well, socialize during your college years, but employers are increasingly checking up on the online activities of potential hires to avoid bringing in employees who may reflect poorly on the company.

Your task: Team up with another student and review each other's public presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and any other website that an employer might check during the interview and recruiting process. Identify any photos, videos, messages, or other material that could raise a red flag when an employer is evaluating a job candidate. Write your teammate an email message that lists any risky material.

EMAIL SKILLS / PORTFOLIO BUILDER

8-47. Media Skills: Email; Message Strategies: Negative Messages [LO-3], Chapter 10 Many companies operate on the principle that the customer is always right, even when the customer isn't right. They take any steps necessary to ensure happy customers, lots of repeat sales, and a positive reputation among potential buyers. Overall, this is a smart and successful approach

Hundreds of realistic exercises, activities, and cases offer an array of opportunities for students to practice vital skills and put newfound knowledge to immediate use. These resources are logically sorted by learning category, from conceptual recall to situational analysis to skill development. To help instructors zero in on specific learning needs, activities are tagged in multiple ways, from media usage to team skills.

About the Authors

John V. Thill and Courtland L. Bovée have been leading textbook authors for more than two decades, introducing millions of students to the fields of business and business communication. Their award-winning texts are distinguished by proven pedagogical features, extensive selections of contemporary case studies, hundreds of real-life examples, engaging writing, thorough research, and the unique integration of print and digital resources. Each new edition reflects the authors' commitment to continuous refinement and improvement, particularly in terms of modeling the latest practices in business and the use of technology.

Mr. Thill is a prominent communications consultant who has worked with organizations ranging from Fortune 500 multinationals to entrepreneurial start-ups. He formerly held positions with Pacific Bell and Texaco. Professor Bovée has 22 years of teaching experience at Grossmont College in San Diego, where he has received teaching honors and was accorded that institution's C. Allen Paul Distinguished Chair.

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BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL CAREER WITH YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

One Course—Three Powerful Benefits

You will invest considerable time and energy in this course, so it's fair to ask what you will get in return. The simple answer: *a lot*. If you practice the techniques you'll discover here and use this opportunity to develop those techniques with your instructor's guidance, we're confident this course will help you in three important ways:

1. It will help you succeed in college.
2. It will help you conduct a more successful job search.
3. It will help you succeed in your first job so you can build a thriving career.

The following sections expand on this promise and offer valuable career-planning advice.

HOW THIS COURSE WILL HELP YOU

Take advantage of this opportunity to develop the single most important skill you'll need for a rewarding career: the ability to communicate. This textbook is designed to help you in three valuable ways.



1. SUCCEED IN COLLEGE

Many of the skills you will learn in this course—writing, giving presentations, working in teams, resolving conflict, and more—can be applied in just about every course you take from now until graduation.



2. FIND THE RIGHT JOB

The entire job search process is really an extended exercise in communication, and the process gives you the chance to use your communication skills to stand apart from the competition.



3. LAUNCH YOUR CAREER

The bulk of this course is devoted to the communication and media skills you will need to use as soon as you enter (or reenter) the workforce. Succeed in your first job, and you'll be on your way to a rewarding career!

TABLE 1: Textbook Features to Help You at Every Stage of College and Career

Textbook Feature	Succeeding in College		Conducting a Successful Job Search
	In This Course	In Other Courses	
Learning Objectives	Use these to focus your study and review		
On the Job vignette (beginning of chapter) and simulation (end of chapter)	See how the pros use chapter concepts At the end of the chapter, follow through on the chapter-opening vignette by visualizing yourself on the job		Get a sense of life on the job in various professions
Figures	Study model documents to see what works and what doesn't	Study reports and other model documents to improve your writing	Use model letters and résumés to build your job search package
Checklists	Confirm understanding of each section	Use for a quick review if needed when completing assignments	Use for a quick review when preparing your job search materials
Highlight boxes	<i>Apply Your Skills Now</i> helps you apply communication skills in and out of class	<i>Apply Your Skills Now</i> helps you apply communication skills in and out of class	<i>Developing as a Professional</i> gets you ready for the world of work <i>Several Intelligent Communication Technology</i> boxes give you insights into what to expect in the job search process
Key Terms glossary	Quickly refer to important terms		
Learning Objectives Checkup	Test your recall of chapter content		
Apply Your Knowledge	Analyze communication scenarios to hone your insights		
Practice Your Skills	Practice chapter skills in a variety of challenges		
Expand Your Skills	Critique professional communication efforts and find career advice		
Build Your Career	Use the activity in each chapter to build your employment package		By the time you get to the employment chapters, you'll have a head start on the materials you need to apply for jobs
Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage	Fine-tune the technical aspects of your writing	Fine-tune the technical aspects of your writing	Fine-tune the technical aspects of your writing
Cases (selected chapters)	Practice crafting professional-quality messages and documents		Use the <i>Portfolio Builder</i> cases to expand your employment portfolio
Five-Minute Guides (selected chapters)	Get quick reminders of how to accomplish important tasks	Use these for communication tasks in other classes, too	Use the guide in Chapter 15 to prepare and update your résumé and the guide in Chapter 16 to prepare for interviews

Stage 1: Succeeding in College

The first step in your career starts right now, with getting your degree and getting the most from all the courses you take between now and graduation. The communication skills you learn in this class can help you in virtually every other course. From brief homework assignments to complicated team projects to interactions with your professors, you will be able to communicate more effectively.

In addition to improving your communication effectiveness, this course will also improve your efficiency. Follow the writing process outlined in this book, and you can avoid the time-wasting uncertainty, dead ends, and rework that can make writing projects drag on forever.

Be sure to take advantage of all the features in this book to get the most from the course (see Table 1). For instance, keep an eye out for the special highlight boxes titled “Apply Your Skills Now,” which offer tips on using your new skills in all your college courses. Read these boxes and think about the situations in which you can apply the advice. If you need to have a difficult conversation with an instructor or resolve conflict in a project team, for example, these boxes can help. Many of these techniques can help you outside of the school environment, too, whenever you face communication challenges in any of your interpersonal relationships.

QUICK TIPS TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

Although this course explores a wide range of message types and appears to cover quite a lot of territory, the underlying structure of the course is rather simple. You’ll learn a few basic concepts, identify the key skills to use and procedures to follow—and then practice, practice, practice. Whether you’re writing a blog post in response to one of the real-company cases or drafting your own résumé, you’ll be practicing the same fundamental skills in a variety of scenarios. With feedback and reinforcement from your instructor and your classmates, your confidence will grow and the work will become easier and more enjoyable.

Some of the assignments will involve business topics that may be new to you or somewhat less than exciting, but view them all as opportunities to hone your craft. Visualize yourself in each scenario and imagine that you are trying to convince a skeptical boss, calm an angry customer, or accomplish whatever task is assigned.

As you read each chapter, take time to study the examples and model documents (see Figure 1). This book offers dozens of realistic examples of business messages, many with notes along the sides that explain strong and weak points. Some are messages from real companies; others were created to show specific points about writing. Study these documents and any other examples your instructor provides. Learn what works and what doesn’t, and then apply these lessons to your own writing.

Along the way, learn from the feedback you get from your instructor and from other students. Don’t take the criticism personally; your instructor and your classmates are commenting about the work, not about you. Always view feedback as an opportunity to improve.

QUICK TIPS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS IN ANY COURSE

For assignments in this or any other course, particularly major projects such as reports and presentations, follow these suggestions to produce better results with less effort:

- **Don’t panic!** If the thought of writing a report or giving a speech sends a chill up your spine, you’re not alone. Everybody feels that way when first learning business communication skills, and even experienced professionals can feel nervous about big projects. Keep three points in mind. First, every project can be broken down into a series of small, manageable tasks. Don’t let a big project overwhelm you; it’s nothing more than a bunch of smaller tasks. Second, remind yourself that you have the skills you need. As you move through the course, the assignments are carefully designed to match the skills you’ve developed up to that point. Third, if you feel panic creeping up on you, take a break and regain your perspective.

Format Insert Draw Options Discard Send

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To: newbizteam@northerndynamics.com; Cc & Bcc

Improving our team meetings: please review before April 7 meeting

Hi team,

I suspect we all signed off from last's week status meeting feeling that things went off the rails toward the end. Having thought about it over the weekend, I think the problem comes down to listening skills and habits. There were just too many instances of people talking over one another or failing to acknowledge what other team members were trying to contribute.

I know our new hybrid work model, with half of us in the office and half of us remote, is not ideal for brainstorming. But this is our reality now, so let's rise to the challenge with the same solution-oriented team spirit that we bring to the rest of our work. Please keep the following habits in mind for our future meetings:

- **Listen actively.** Make a conscious effort to engage with other people. Turn off your internal filters and biases so you can truly hear and understand what they are saying.
- **Avoid defensive listening.** Brainstorming isn't a competition; the point is to gather as many ideas as possible. If someone suggests a plan you don't agree with or that counters your own ideas, don't tune them out.
- **Practice patience.** We are a passionate crew—it's one of the reasons we are so successful! However, passion can get in the way of empathy and respectful listening. Remember we are here to create business opportunities, not prove who is the smartest.
- **Never interrupt.** This is always good manners but particularly vital with half the team on remote connections. Also, when you are the one talking, don't monopolize the conversation. Pause after sharing important ideas so people can ask questions or add to the conversation without feeling they have no options but to interrupt.

I appreciate your efforts toward making our team meetings productive and enjoyable. If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch.

Thanks,
Aniyah

Aniyah Sparks
(she/her/hers)
Director, New Business Initiatives
Mobile: 707-555-1099

The subject line lets readers know the message needs their attention soon.

The greeting is friendly but respectful.

Using the direct approach, she gets right to the issue.

After describing the problem, she moves directly to a solution.

The bullet list makes her advice easy to read on any device.

Because she is the manager of this department, she can assume her employees will comply with her request, but she invites feedback as well.

A signature file automatically appends her contact information to the end of the message.

Figure 1 Learning from Model Documents and Messages

You will find a wide variety of model documents and messages throughout the book, everything from tweets to formal reports. Study the notes in the margins to understand why specific writing techniques work (or don't work, in some cases), and apply these lessons to your own writing.

- **Focus on one task at a time.** Don't try to organize and express your ideas while simultaneously worrying about audience reactions, grammar, spelling, formatting, page design, and a dozen other factors. Fight the temptation to do everything at once. Trying to get everything perfect on the first pass will make the process slow and frustrating. In particular, don't worry too much about word choices or overall writing style during your first draft. Concentrate on the organization of your ideas first, then the best way to express those ideas, and then finally the presentation and production of your messages. Following the three-step writing process is an ideal way to focus on one task at a time in a logical sequence.
- **Give yourself plenty of time.** As with every other school project, waiting until the last minute creates unnecessary stress. Writing and speaking projects are much easier if you tackle them in small stages with breaks in between, rather than trying to get everything done in one frantic blast. Moreover, there will be instances when you simply get stuck on a project, and the best thing to do is put it aside for a while and give your mind a break. If you allow room for breaks in your schedule, you'll minimize the frustration and spend less time overall on your homework, too.



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- **Step back and assess each project before you start.** The writing and speaking projects you'll have in this course cover a wide range of communication scenarios, and it's essential that you adapt your approach to each new challenge. Resist the urge to dive in and start writing without a plan. Ponder the assignment for a while, consider the various approaches you might take, and think carefully about your objectives before you start writing. Nothing is more frustrating than getting stuck halfway through because you're not sure what you're trying to say or you've wandered off track. Spend a little more time planning, and you'll spend a lot less time writing.
- **Use the three-step writing process.** Those essential planning tasks are the first step in the three-step writing process, which you'll learn about in Chapter 5 and use throughout the course. This process has been developed and refined by professional writers with decades of experience and thousands of projects ranging from short blog posts to 600-page textbooks. It works, so take advantage of it.

Stage 2: Conducting a Successful Job Search

Every activity in the job-search process relies on communication. The better you can communicate, the more successful you'll be at landing interesting and rewarding work. Plus, you can reduce the stress of preparing a résumé and going to job interviews.

Writing a résumé can feel intimidating, but you don't need to do it all at once if you give yourself plenty of time. The 16 “Build Your Career” activities (see the end of each chapter) show you how to build your job-search package one step at a time. Do the activity in each chapter, and by the time you finish the book, you'll have the materials you need to start your job search.

Chapters 15 and 16 are dedicated to various forms of employment-related communication. If your course doesn't cover these chapters, your college probably offers a workshop or other activity to help you get ready to apply and interview for jobs. No matter where you learn the skills related to résumés and interviewing, this section will help you think about the career you want to craft for yourself, with advice on finding the best fit, developing an employment portfolio, and defining your personal brand.

FINDING THE BEST FIT

Figuring out where and how you can thrive professionally is a lifelong quest. You don't need to have all the answers today, and your answers will no doubt change in the coming years. However, start thinking about it now so that you can bring some focus to your job search. Organize your strategic planning with three questions: what you want to do, what you have to offer, and how you can make yourself more valuable.



Gorodenkofi/Shutterstock

What Do You Want to Do?

Economic necessities and the dynamics of the marketplace will influence much of what happens in your career, and you may not always have the opportunity to do the kind of work you would really like to do. Even if you can't get the job you want right now, though, start your job search by examining your values and interests. Doing so will give you a better idea of where you want to be eventually, and you can use those insights to learn and grow your way toward that ideal situation. Consider these factors:

- **What would you like to do every day?** Research occupations that interest you. Find out what people really do every day. Ask friends, relatives, alumni from your school, and contacts in your social networks. Read interviews with people in various professions to get a sense of what their careers are like.
- **How would you like to work?** Consider how much independence you want on the job, how much variety you like, and whether you prefer to work with products, systems, people, ideas, words, data, or some combination of these.
- **Where would you like to work?** Do you like the idea of working from home or being a digital nomad who can travel at will while still working? In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies redesigned their workplace models, so make sure you understand a company's policy on remote work before you accept a job offer. At one extreme, some companies are *office-first*, requiring everyone to work in the office during normal office hours and allowing remote work only in rare exceptions. At the other extreme, some companies are *remote-first*, where everyone works remotely and the company has no traditional offices. In between, you can find a variety of hybrid and flexible formats, such as working from home two or three days a week and in the office for the rest of the week.
- **How do your financial goals fit with your other priorities?** For instance, many high-paying jobs involve a lot of stress, sacrifices of time with family and friends, and frequent travel or relocation. If other factors—such as stability, location, lifestyle, or intriguing work—are more important to you, you may have to sacrifice some level of pay to achieve them.
- **Have you established some general career goals?** For example, do you want to pursue a career specialty such as finance or manufacturing, or do you want to gain experience in multiple areas with an eye toward general management or entrepreneurship?
- **What sort of work culture are you most comfortable with?** Would you be happy in a formal hierarchy with clear reporting relationships? Or do you prefer less structure? Teamwork or individualism? Do you prefer a competitive environment or a more cooperative culture?

You might need some time in the workforce to figure out what you really want to do, but it's never too early to start thinking about where you want to be. The assessment in Table 2 might help you get a clearer picture of the nature of the work you would like to pursue in your career.

TABLE 2: Career Planning Self-Assessment

Activity or Situation	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	No Preference
1. I want to work independently.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. I want variety in my work.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. I want to work with people.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. I want to work with technology.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. I don't want to be stuck in an office all day.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. I want mentally challenging work.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. I want to work for a large organization.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. I want to work for a nonprofit organization.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. I want to work for a small business.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. I want to work for a service business.	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. I want to start or buy a business someday.	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. I want regular, predictable work hours.	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. I want to work in a city location.	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. I want to work in a small town or suburb.	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. I want to work in another country.	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. I want to work from home, even if I'm employed by someone else.	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. I want to work in a highly dynamic profession or industry, even if it's unstable at times.	_____	_____	_____	_____
18. I want as much career stability as possible.	_____	_____	_____	_____
19. I want to enjoy my work, even if that means making less money.	_____	_____	_____	_____
20. I want to become a high-level corporate manager.	_____	_____	_____	_____

What Do You Have to Offer?

Knowing what you want to do is one thing. Knowing what companies or clients are willing to pay you to do is another thing entirely. You may already have a good idea of what you can offer employers. If not, some brainstorming can help you identify your skills, interests, and characteristics. Start by listing achievements you're proud of and experiences that were satisfying, and identify the skills that enabled these achievements. For example, leadership skills, speaking ability, and artistic talent may have helped you coordinate a successful class project. As you analyze your achievements, you may begin to recognize a pattern of skills. Which of these would be valuable to potential employers?

Next, look at your educational preparation, work experience, and extracurricular activities. What do your knowledge and experience qualify you to do? What have you learned from volunteer work or class projects that could benefit you on the job? Have you held any offices, won any awards or scholarships, mastered a second language? What skills have you developed in nonbusiness situations that could transfer to a business position?

Take stock of your personal characteristics. Are you assertive, a born leader? Or are you more comfortable contributing under someone else's leadership? Are you outgoing, articulate, and comfortable around people? Or do you prefer working alone? Make a list of what you believe are your four or five most important qualities. Ask a relative or friend to rate your traits as well.

If you're having difficulty figuring out your interests, characteristics, or capabilities, consult your college career center. Many campuses administer a variety of tests that can help you identify interests, aptitudes, and personality traits. These tests won't reveal your "perfect" job, but they'll help you focus on the types of work best suited to your personality.

How Can You Make Yourself More Valuable?

While you're figuring out what you want from a job and what you can offer an employer, you can take positive steps toward building your career. First, look for opportunities to develop skills, gain experience, and expand your professional network. These might involve internships, volunteer work, freelance projects, part-time jobs, or projects that you initiate on your own. You can look for freelance projects on Craigslist and numerous other websites; some of these jobs have only nominal pay, but they do provide an opportunity for you to display your skills. Also consider applying your talents to *crowdsourcing* projects, in which companies and nonprofit organizations invite the public to contribute solutions to various challenges. Look for ways to expand your *employment portfolio* and establish your *personal brand* (see the following sections).

Second, learn more about the industry or industries in which you want to work, and stay on top of new developments. Join networks of professional colleagues and friends who can help you keep up with trends and events. Follow the leading voices in a profession on social media. Many professional societies have student chapters or offer students discounted memberships.

BUILDING AN EMPLOYMENT PORTFOLIO

Employers want proof that you have the skills to succeed on the job, which can be challenging if you don't have a lot of relevant work experience in your target field. Fortunately, you can use your college classes, volunteer work, and other activities to assemble compelling proof by creating an *employment portfolio*, a collection of projects that demonstrate your skills and knowledge.

Your portfolio is likely to be a multimedia effort that might include physical work samples (such as reports, proposals, or marketing materials), digital documents, web content, blog posts, photographs, video clips, and other items. As appropriate, you can include these items in your LinkedIn profile, bring them to interviews, and have them ready whenever an employer, client, or networking contact asks for samples of your work.

Throughout this book, pay close attention to the assignments marked "Portfolio Builder," which start in Chapter 8. These items can make good samples of your communication skills and your ability to understand and solve business-related challenges. By



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combining these projects with samples from your other courses, you can create a compelling portfolio when you're ready to start interviewing. Your portfolio is also a great resource for writing your résumé because it reminds you of all the work you've done over the years. Moreover, you can continue to refine and expand your portfolio throughout your career; many independent professionals use online portfolios to advertise their services.

As you assemble your portfolio, collect anything that shows your ability to perform, whether it's in school, on the job, or in other venues. However, you *must* check with employers before including any items that you created while you were an employee, and check with clients before including any *work products* (anything you wrote, designed, programmed, and so on) they purchased from you. Many business documents contain confidential information that companies don't want distributed to outside audiences.

For each item in your portfolio, write a brief description that helps other people understand the meaning and significance of the project. Include such items as these:

- **Background.** Why did you undertake this project? Was it a school project, a work assignment, or something you did on your own initiative?
- **Project objectives.** Explain the project's goals, if relevant.
- **Collaborators.** If you worked with others, be sure to mention that and discuss team dynamics if appropriate. For instance, if you led the team or worked with others long distance as a virtual team, point that out.
- **Constraints.** Sometimes the most impressive thing about a project is the time or budget constraints under which it was created. If such constraints apply to a project, consider mentioning them in a way that doesn't sound like an excuse for poor quality. If you had only one week to create a website, for example, you might say that "One of the intriguing challenges of this project was the deadline; I had only one week to design, compose, test, and publish this material."
- **Outcomes.** If the project's goals were measurable, what was the result? For example, if you wrote a letter soliciting donations for a charitable cause, how much money did you raise?
- **Learning experience.** If appropriate, describe what you learned during the course of the project.

Keep in mind that the portfolio itself is a communication project. Be sure to apply everything you'll learn in this course about effective communication and good design so you can present yourself at your professional best.

BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

You have probably heard the advice to develop a "personal brand" but might not know how to proceed or might not be comfortable with the concept of "branding" yourself. This section presents five steps that can make the task easier and more authentic.

Note that the process outlined here isn't about coming up with three or four words that are supposed to describe you, such as *visionary*, *creator*, *problem solver*, or things like that, as you may come across in some discussions of personal branding. This is a much more practical and comprehensive process that identifies the specific qualifications that you can bring to the job, backs them up with solid evidence, and makes sure you are ready with a concise answer when an employer asks, "So, tell me about yourself."

Don't Call It Personal Branding If You Don't Care for the Term

Some people object to the term personal branding, with its associations of product marketing, the implied need to "get out there and promote yourself," and perhaps the unseemly idea of reducing something as complex as yourself to an advertising slogan. If you are just starting your career, you might also wonder how to craft a meaningful brand when you don't have any relevant work experience.

Moreover, although personal branding makes obvious sense for professional speakers, authors, consultants, entrepreneurs, and others who must promote themselves in the public marketplace, those who aspire to professional or managerial positions in a corporate structure may rightly wonder why they need to "brand" themselves at all.

However, the underlying concept of branding as a *promise* applies to everyone, no matter the career stage or trajectory. A brand is fundamentally a promise to deliver on a specific set of values. For everyone in business, that promise is critical, whether it extends to a million people in the online audience for a TED talk or a half-dozen people inside a small company. And even if you never think about your personal brand, you are continuously creating and re-creating it by the way you conduct yourself as a professional. In other words, even if you reject the idea of personal branding, other people will form an opinion of you and your “brand” anyway, so you might as well take charge and help create the impression that you want others to have of you.

As an alternative to a personal brand, think of your *professional promise*. Frame it this way: When people hear your name, what do you want them to think about you and your professional attributes and qualifications?

Write the “Story of You”

When it’s time to write or update your résumé, step back and think about where you’ve been in your life and your career and where you’d like to go. Helpful questions include *Do you like the path you’re on, or is it time for a change? Are you focused on a particular field, or do you need some time to explore?*

This is also a great planning tool for developing a personal brand. In Chapter 15, you’ll see this referred to as writing the “story of you,” and it’s divided into three sections:

- **Where I have been**—the experiences from my past that give me insight into where I would like to go in the future
- **Where I am now**—where I currently stand in terms of education and career, and what I know about myself (including knowledge and skills, personal attributes, and professional interests)
- **Where I want to be**—the career progress and experiences I want to have, areas I want to explore, and goals I want to achieve

Think in terms of an image or a theme you’d like to project. *Am I academically gifted? A daring innovator? A well-rounded professional with wide-ranging talents? A technical wizard? A dependable, “go-to” problem solver who people can count on? A “connector” who can bring people and resources together?*

Writing this story arc is a valuable planning exercise that helps you think about where you want to go in your career. In essence, you are clarifying who you are professionally and defining a future version of yourself—and these are the foundations of your personal brand/professional promise. Another important benefit is that it makes the personal branding effort authentic because it is based on your individual interests and passions.

Construct Your Brand Pyramid

With your professional story arc as a guide, the next step is to construct a *brand pyramid* that has all the relevant support points needed to build a personal brand message (see Figure 2).

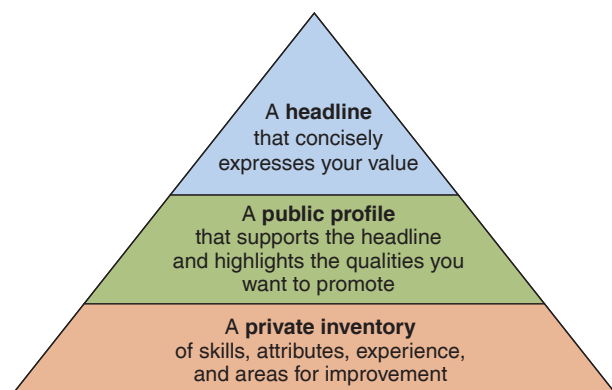


Figure 2 Your Personal Brand Pyramid

Build your personal brand at three levels: a *private inventory* of your skills and assets, a *public profile* based on that inventory and how you want to present yourself to the world, and a *headline* that encapsulates what you can do for employers or clients.

Start by compiling a *private inventory* of skills, attributes, experience, and areas for improvement, including everything you identified earlier in the “What Do You Have to Offer?” section. This should be a positive but realistic assessment of what you have to offer now and a “to-grow” list of areas where you want to develop or improve. Obviously, this inventory isn’t for public consumption, so be honest with yourself. As much as possible, provide evidence to back up each quality you list. If you are diligent and detail oriented, for instance, identify a time that you saved a project by methodically analyzing the situation to find a problem that others had overlooked. If you are a creative thinker, identify a time when you came up with an unusual new idea at work.

Don’t underestimate yourself when it comes to your positive qualities. You are probably good at some things you don’t even think about because they come naturally to you. Maybe you’re that go-to person others call on when they need advice, a helping hand, or just someone who can lend a caring ear for a few moments. Maybe you’re the one who always provides that spark of energy to help a team power through a rough patch. Maybe you bring out the best in other people by encouraging them and raising them up. Maybe you do the little things that no one else notices but that keep projects on track. Attributes such as these aren’t as easy to quantify as measurable skills and achievements, but they are immensely valuable to employers and clients.

Next, select the appropriate materials from your inventory to develop a *public profile* that highlights the qualities you want to promote. As “Put Your Promise to Work” explains, this profile can take on a variety of forms for different communication platforms.

Finally, distill your professional promise down to a single, brief headline, also known as a *tagline* or *elevator pitch*. The headline should be a statement of compelling value, not a generic job title. Instead of “I’m a social media specialist,” you might say, “I help small companies get the same reach on social media as giant corporations.”

Of course, many students won’t have the relevant job experience to say something like that, and your personal brand might be more an expression of potential. Even if you have no relevant professional experience, you still have personal attributes and educational qualifications that are the foundations of your brand. The key is to make sure it’s realistic and suggests a logical connection between the present and the future. Someone pursuing an MBA in finance can reasonably claim to have a strong toolset for financial analysis, but someone with no corporate work experience can’t claim to be a bold, high-impact executive.

Here’s a good example: “I am a data science major ready to make numbers come alive through leading-edge techniques in deep learning, data mining, and visualization.”

Note that both your public profile and your headline should use relevant *keywords* from target job descriptions. You can read more about keywords in Chapter 15.

Reduce or Eliminate Factors That Could Damage Your Brand

Every brand, no matter how popular and powerful, can be damaged by negative perceptions or performance issues. After identifying all your positives, do an objective analysis of areas that could undermine your career-building efforts. For example, someone who tends to overpromise and underdeliver is going to develop a reputation for unreliability that could outweigh whatever positive qualities they can bring to the job. Other concerns might be related to specific skills that you need to develop in order to progress toward your career goals.

Be constantly mindful of the “multimedia you” that the world sees—your online presence, your conduct in business and social settings, the way you sound on the phone, the way you treat other people, and anything else that shapes your reputation. Careers can be derailed by a single misjudged social media post, for instance, so always be putting the best “you” on display.

Put Your Promise to Work

Now it’s time to put the branding message to work. Your public profile could be expressed in a variety of ways—as a conventional résumé, the summary section on LinkedIn, an infographic résumé, or the introductory section of a personal website.

The headline can be adapted and used in multiple ways as well, including the headline field on LinkedIn, the qualifications summary on your résumé, your social media profiles, and as a ready answer to the common interview question “So, tell me about yourself.”

The “Build Your Career” activity in Chapter 6 has more on developing and using your headline, such as the advice to create a slightly more formal version for written use and a more conversational version for using while speaking with people.

Naturally, your brand message should be consistent across all the platforms and conversations where it is used. For instance, an employer reviewing your résumé is likely to visit your LinkedIn profile as well, so it’s important that the messages match. If you complete your branding pyramid first, it’ll be easy to adapt it to a variety of different purposes while keeping your message consistent.

As you progress through your career, bear in mind that all this planning and communication is of no value if you fail to deliver on your brand promise. Remember that branding is only a *promise*—it’s your *performance* that ultimately counts. When you deliver quality results time after time, your talents and professionalism will speak for you.

Lastly, your branding pyramid should be a “living document” that is updated whenever you acquire new skills or job experiences or want to move in a different direction. In addition, periodically revisiting it can be a good way to recapture the passion that initially launched you on your career path.

Stage 3: Succeeding in Your First Job

Your first job sets the stage for your career and gives you an opportunity to explore how you want to position yourself for the long term. If you are already working or are changing careers, you can combine these skills with the work-life perspective you already have to take your career to a new level.

As you progress along your career path, the time and energy you have invested in this course will continue to yield benefits year after year. As you tackle each new challenge, influential company leaders—the people who decide how quickly you’ll get promoted and how much you’ll earn—will be paying close attention to how well you communicate. They will observe your interactions with colleagues, customers, and business partners. They’ll take note of how well you can collect data, find the essential ideas buried under mountains of information, and convey those points to other people. They’ll observe your ability to adapt to different audiences and circumstances. They’ll be watching when you encounter tough situations that require careful attention to ethics and etiquette. The good news: Every insight you gain and every skill you develop in this course will help you shine in your career.

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PART

1

Understanding the Foundations of Business Communication

CHAPTER **1** Professional Communication in a Digital, Social, Mobile World

CHAPTER **2** Interpersonal Communication Skills

CHAPTER **3** Collaboration and Business Etiquette

CHAPTER **4** Communication Challenges in a Diverse, Global Marketplace

No other skill can help your career in as many ways as communication. Discover what business communication is all about, why communication skills are essential to your career, how intelligent technology is revolutionizing business communication, and how to adapt your communication experiences in life and college to the business world. Improve your skills in such vital areas as listening, conflict resolution, collaboration, negotiation, and professional etiquette. Explore the advantages and the challenges of a diverse workforce, and develop the skills that every communicator needs to succeed in today's global, multicultural business environment.



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Professional Communication in a Digital, Social, Mobile World



ON THE JOB: COMMUNICATING AT **KLM**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- 1 Explain the importance of effective communication to your career and to the companies where you will work.
- 2 Explain what it means to communicate as a professional in a business context.
- 3 Contrast the conventional communication process model with the social communication model.
- 4 Identify five major benefits of business communication technology and three major innovations that are reshaping the practice of communication.
- 5 Define *ethics*, identify five forms of unethical communication, explain the difference between an ethical dilemma and an ethical lapse, and list five guidelines for making ethical communication choices.
- 6 Identify six related skills that you will have the opportunity to develop as you work on your communication skills in this course.

If you have ever served a customer, you know how challenging it can be to ensure that their experience with your company is a positive one and that they will come back for more. Imagine, then, the challenge of handling thousands of comments and questions a day via multiple social media channels and in several key languages. This is exactly what KLM Royal Dutch Airlines' social media-servicing department aims to do. More than that, it endeavors to be aware of the specific details of each customer as it responds to them promptly and appropriately.

At the forefront of the airline industry in Europe, KLM is the oldest airline in the world to still be operating under its original name. KLM says that customers are at the heart of its business, and it prides itself on offering them innovative products and a safe, efficient, customer-centric experience.

The airline was one of the first to really get social media and understand the power of interacting with its customers. KLM Social Media started in 2009 as a tiny department that used Facebook and Twitter and posted photos of planes or messages about the occasional campaign. Events like the eruption of the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull in April 2010, whose ash clouds seriously disrupted air traffic in the region, introduced KLM to the broader potential of social media. In response to the eruption, KLM immediately provided a full social media service via Facebook and Twitter for passengers and their families.

The company soon became one of the first airlines to offer customers 24/7 service via social media, especially on Twitter. In fact, KLM became the first airline ever to reschedule a passenger flight following a request from a user on that platform.

KLM now has one of the biggest social media service departments of any airline. KLM Royal Dutch Airlines' official Facebook page has over 14 million likes and offers personal service in 10 languages. The main Twitter account has 2.3 million followers, but each of its country accounts has a strong follower base as well. Social media agents are ready to interact 24/7 with the over 2 million travelers who follow the company across their various channels. These agents aim to answer questions on KLM products and services and resolve problems within 30 minutes. Naturally, customers are requested to share personal information only through private direct messages.

What's more, KLM was the first airline with a verified WhatsApp business account and also the first to offer a combination of



Gaertner/Alamy Stock Photo

KLM is one of the first airlines to have really understood the power of interacting with customers on social media.

human agents and artificial intelligence. In its hologram bars at airports in the Netherlands, passengers to Norway and Brazil can connect virtually with someone traveling to their destination and exchange travel and culture tips.

A core element of KLM's communication strategy is its aim to be the "leading airline in customer intimacy." Its social media servicing department ensures that passengers receive a prompt, tailored reply, not just a link through to other channels. The KLM

app for smartphone, tablet, or smartwatch also gives customers direct access to KLM Customer Support. Customers can get all the travel information they need, book flights, and check in from their mobile device. As KLM innovates, its focus will be on complementing its one-to-many social media channels with one-to-few digital services in various applications.¹

TWITTER.COM/KLM

Understanding Why Communication Matters

Communication is complex, and KLM's ambitious social media program highlights its importance to every business (see the chapter-opening "On the Job"). **Communication** is the process of transferring information and meaning between senders and receivers, using one or more forms of media. For communication to be considered successful, it also must transfer understanding.² As Figure 1.1 indicates, communication can happen in a variety of ways, including successful transfers of information and understanding, negotiations in which the sender and receiver arrive at an agreed-on meaning, and unsuccessful attempts in which the receiver assembles a different message than the one the sender intended.

COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR CAREER

You can have the greatest ideas in the world, but they usually aren't much good to your company or your career if you can't express them clearly and persuasively. Some jobs, such as sales and customer support roles, are primarily about communicating. In fields such as engineering or finance, you often need to share complex ideas with executives, customers, and colleagues, and your ability to connect with people outside your field can be as important as your technical expertise. If you have the entrepreneurial urge, you will need to communicate with a wide range of audiences—from investors, bankers, and government regulators to employees, customers, and business partners.

The changing nature of employment is putting new pressure on communication skills, too. Companies such as Uber, Lyft, and Instacart are the most visible in the *gig economy*, where independent contractors work without many of the advantages or the disadvantages of regular employment. Many other companies now supplement their permanent workforces with independent contractors who are brought on for a short period or even just a single project. You might spend part of your career as one of these independent freelancers, working without the support network that an established company environment provides. If so, you will need to "sell yourself" into each new contract, communicate successfully in a wide range of work situations, and take full responsibility for your career growth and success.

If you move into an executive role or launch your own company, you can expect communication to consume the majority of your time. Top executives spend most of their workdays communicating, and businesspeople who can't communicate well don't stand much chance of reaching the top.

No matter which path you follow, keep in mind that the world is full of good marketing strategists, good accountants, good engineers, and good attorneys—but it is not full of good communicators. View this as an opportunity to stand out from your competition in the job market.

1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE
Explain the importance of effective communication to your career and to the companies where you will work.

communication The process of transferring information, meaning, and understanding between senders and receivers

The Prologue will help you get the most out of your textbook, and it offers tips on using this course to plan a more successful and less stressful job search.

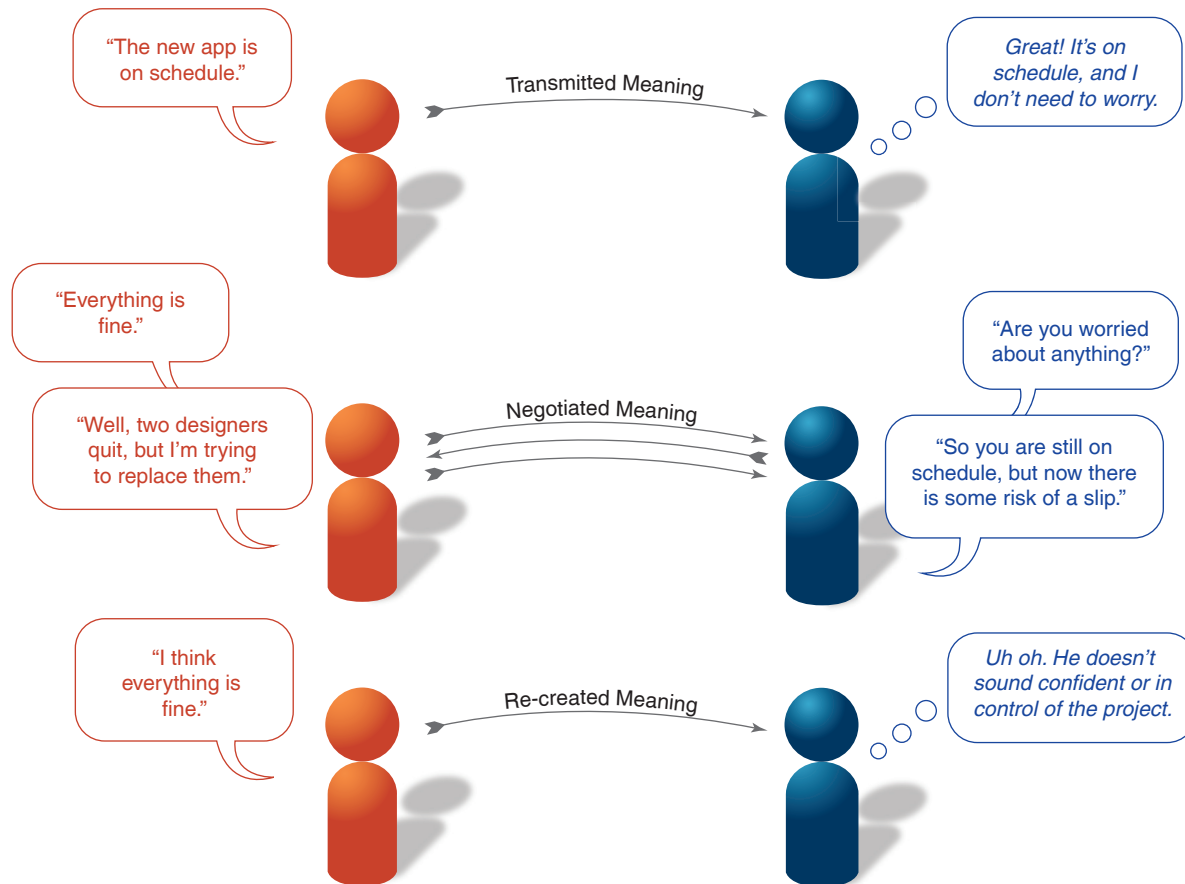


Figure 1.1 Sharing Information and Understanding

These three exchanges between a software project manager (left) and his boss (right) illustrate the variety of ways in which information is shared between senders and receivers. In the top exchange, the sender's meaning is transmitted intact to the receiver, who accepts what the sender says at face value. In the middle exchange, the sender and receiver negotiate the meaning by discussing the situation. The negotiated meaning is that everything is fine so far, but the risk of a schedule slip is now higher than it was before. In the bottom exchange, the receiver has a negative emotional reaction to the word *think* and as a result creates her own meaning—which is that everything probably is not fine, despite what the sender says.

COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR COMPANY

Aside from the personal benefits, communication should be important to you because it is important to your company, in three essential ways:

- **Operations.** Every company needs fast, effective communication between managers and staff, within departments, between departments, and between the company and its external business partners. Communication carries everything from high-level strategic plans down to minute technical details, and any bottlenecks or breakdowns can reduce operational efficiency and create problems with quality or safety.
- **Intelligence.** Companies need to keep a constant "ear to the ground" to be alerted to new opportunities, risks, and impending problems—both internally and externally.
- **Relationships.** Just as in personal and social relationships, business relationships depend on communication. Effective communication strengthens the connections between a company and all its **stakeholders**, which are any persons or organizations significantly affected by the company's business decisions and operations.³ Stakeholder groups include employees, customers, investors, creditors, suppliers, and local communities. Individuals within companies also rely on communication to foster the emotional connections that create a healthy work environment.⁴

stakeholders Groups affected by a company's actions, including customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers, neighbors, and local communities

The shift to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the value of business communication. For example, with colleagues and teams working in different locations and often at different times of the day or night, having clear and complete written records of project details, decisions, customer histories, and other functional activities became more vital than ever.⁵

WHAT MAKES BUSINESS COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVE?

To make your communication efforts as effective as possible, focus on making them *practical, factual, concise, clear, and persuasive*:

- **Provide practical information.** Give recipients useful information that helps them solve problems, pursue opportunities, or take any other action that might be called for.
- **Give facts rather than vague impressions.** Use concrete language, specific detail, and information that is clear, convincing, accurate, and ethical. When an opinion is called for, present compelling evidence to support your conclusion.
- **Present information in a concise, efficient manner.** Concise messages show respect for people's time, and they increase the chances of a positive response.
- **Clarify expectations and responsibilities.** Craft messages to generate a specific response from a specific audience. When appropriate, clearly state what you expect from audience members or what you can do for them.
- **Offer compelling, persuasive arguments and recommendations.** When a situation calls for persuasive communication, show your readers how they will benefit by responding the way you would like them to respond.

Keep these five important characteristics in mind as you compare the ineffective and effective versions of the message in Figure 1.2.

Communicating as a Professional

You've been communicating your entire life, of course, but if you don't have a lot of work experience yet, meeting the expectations of a professional environment might require some adjustment. A good place to start is to consider what it means to be a professional. **Professionalism** is the quality of performing at a high level and conducting oneself with purpose and pride. It means doing more than putting in the hours and collecting a paycheck: True professionals go beyond minimum expectations and commit to making meaningful contributions. Professionalism can be broken down into six distinct traits: striving to excel, being dependable and accountable, being a team player, demonstrating a sense of etiquette, making ethical decisions, and maintaining a positive outlook (see Figure 1.3).

A key message to glean from Figure 1.3 is how much these elements of professionalism depend on effective communication. For example, to be a team player, you need to be able to collaborate, resolve conflicts, and interact with a wide variety of personalities. Without strong communication skills, you won't be able to perform to your potential, and others won't recognize you as the professional you'd like to be.

This section offers a brief look at the skills employers will expect you to have, the nature of communication in an organizational environment, and the importance of adopting an audience-centered approach.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT EMPLOYERS EXPECT FROM YOU

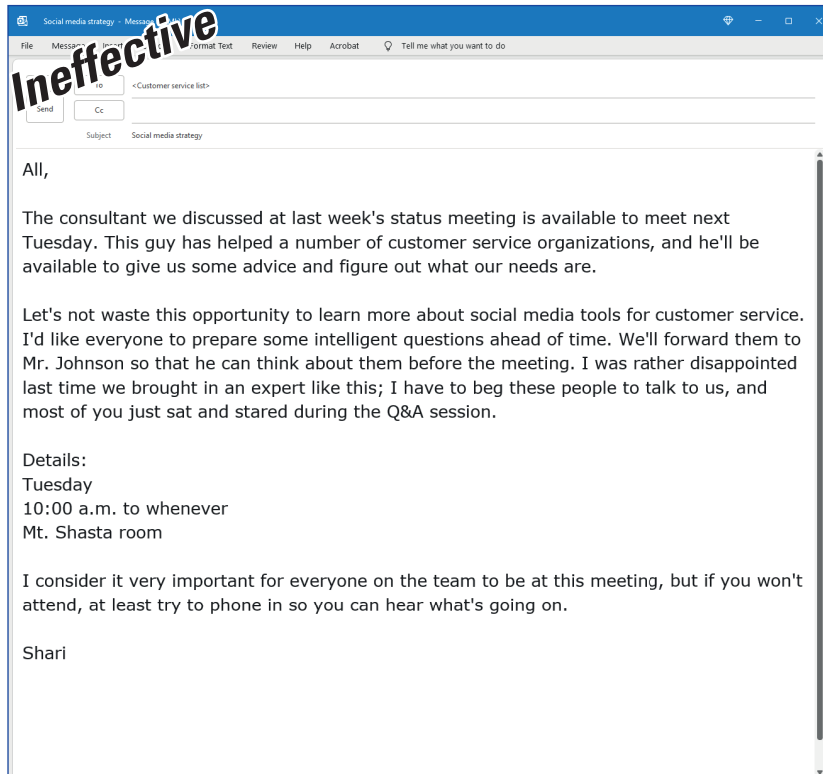
Today's employers expect you to be competent at a range of communication tasks:

- **Acquiring, processing, and sharing information.** Employers expect you to be able to recognize information needs, locate and evaluate reliable sources of information (particularly from online sources), organize information into cohesive messages, and use information ethically. This collection of skills is often referred to as *digital literacy* or *digital information fluency*.⁶ Information fluency includes **critical thinking**, which is the

2 LEARNING OBJECTIVE
Explain what it means to communicate as a professional in a business context.

professionalism The quality of performing at a high level and conducting oneself with purpose and pride

critical thinking The ability to evaluate evidence completely and objectively in order to form logical conclusions and make sound recommendations



- (a) The vague subject line, "Social media strategy," fails to alert people to the upcoming meeting.
- (b) The greeting is cold and off-putting.
- (c) The opening paragraph fails to provide necessary background information for anyone who missed the previous meeting.
- (d) A negative, accusatory tone puts readers on the defensive, and the request for action fails to clarify who needs to do what by when.
- (e) The meeting information includes the day, but not the date, which could lead to confusion.
- (f) The wording here assumes that people who won't attend don't want to, which might not be true. The writer also fails to invite questions ahead of time.
- (g) The lack of a closing (such as "Thank you") contributes to the harsh, abrupt tone.
- (h) The writer fails to provide alternative contact information.

- (a) An informative subject line, "Social media strategy meeting, Tuesday 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.," helps people grasp important details immediately.
- (b) The greeting is friendly without being too casual.
- (c) The opening paragraph fills in missing information so that everyone can grasp the importance of the message.
- (d) This upbeat paragraph emphasizes the positive value of the meeting, and the request provides enough information to enable readers to respond.
- (e) The date eliminates scheduling uncertainty.
- (f) The writer offers everyone a chance to participate without making anyone feel guilty about not being able to attend in person. The closing paragraph invites questions ahead of time so they don't derail the meeting.
- (g) Like the greeting, the close has a warm and personal tone, without being too casual.
- (h) The email signature provides additional information and alternative contact options.

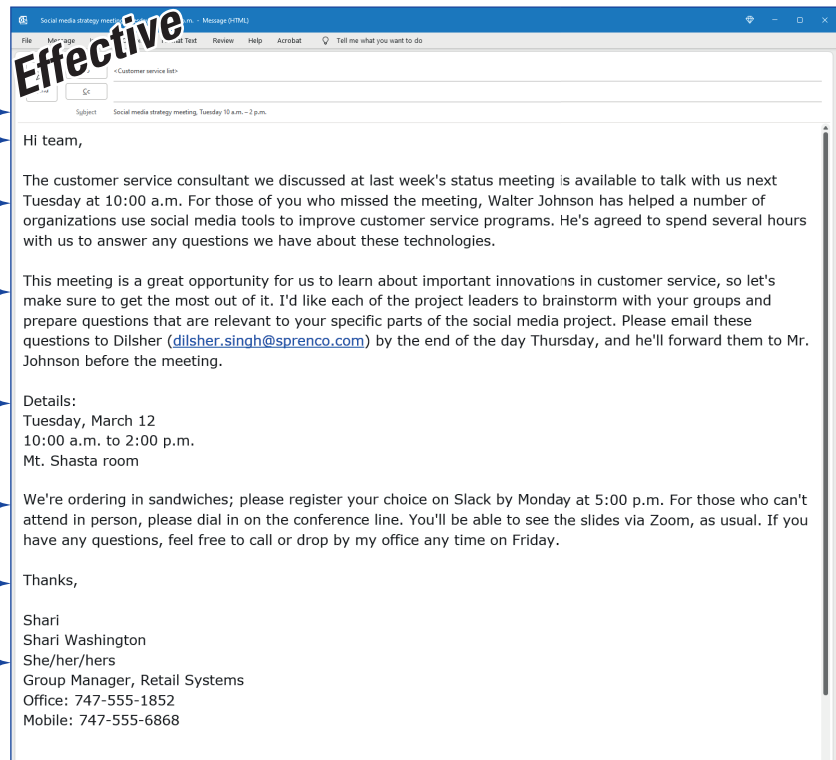


Figure 1.2 Effective Professional Communication

At first glance, this email message might look like a reasonable attempt at communicating with the members of a project team. However, review the blue annotations to see just how many problems the message really has.



Figure 1.3 Elements of Professionalism

To be respected as a true professional, develop these six qualities.

ability to evaluate evidence completely and objectively in order to form logical conclusions and make sound recommendations.

- **Using communication to foster positive working relationships.** This task includes listening, practicing good etiquette, resolving conflicts respectfully, and communicating with people from diverse backgrounds.
- **Representing your employer in the public arena.** Employers expect you to conduct yourself responsibly and professionally on social media and in other venues and to follow accepted standards of grammar, spelling, and other aspects of quality writing and speaking.
- **Efficiently using the tools at your disposal.** Aside from in-person conversations and meetings, every instance of business communication involves some level of technological assistance, so employers expect a level of proficiency with the tools they provide you to use.

You'll have the opportunity to practice these skills throughout this course, but don't stop there. Successful professionals continue to hone communication skills throughout their careers.

COMMUNICATING IN AN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

In addition to having the proper skills, you need to learn how to apply those skills in the business environment, which can be quite different from the social and scholastic environments you are accustomed to. Every organization has a **formal communication network**, in which ideas and information flow along the lines of command (the hierarchical levels) in the company's organization structure (see Figure 1.4).

formal communication network Communication channels that flow along the lines of command in an organization

APPLY YOUR SKILLS NOW**Practice Your Professionalism**

Don't wait until you're on the job to develop your professionalism. College gives you multiple opportunities to hone your approach to work, which will help you hit the ground running after you graduate. The sooner you can get in sync with the professional work environment, the sooner you are likely to succeed in your first job and position yourself for a promotion. If you are already working or have worked in a business setting, think about the ways you could make an even stronger impression and fine-tune those skills.

Here are three opportunities to start pursuing now:

- **Communication with your instructors.** If you have ever started an email message to an instructor with "Yo, prof," now would be a good time to up your game. Imagine that you are communicating with a high-level executive or someone else whose opinion of you will have a huge impact on your career advancement. You don't have to be stiff and overly formal; read the situation based on how each instructor communicates with you. Use a respectful greeting (ask your instructors how they would like to be greeted in person and in writing, if they haven't already told you), complete sentences, and standard punctuation.

- **The quality of your work.** Everything you produce reflects your commitment to quality, in both substance and presentation. Get in the habit of doing your best work now, and it'll be second nature by the time you're getting paid to do it.
- **Scheduling and commitments.** Missing deadlines on the job can mean missing major career opportunities. Meeting your commitments requires the ability to estimate how long things will take (which comes with practice and careful planning) and the mental strength to power through the tough parts of a project.

COACH YOURSELF

1. How would you rate the quality of your interactions with your instructors? What could you do to improve communication?
2. Do you feel awkward when communicating at a more formal level than you are accustomed to in your personal or social life? What steps can you take to get comfortable with "professional grade" communication before you graduate?

Throughout the formal network, information flows in four directions. *Downward communication* flows from top executives to middle managers to frontline employees, conveying executive decisions and providing information that helps employees do their jobs. *Upward communication* flows from employees to middle managers and from middle managers to top executives, giving those at high levels insight into problems, trends, opportunities,

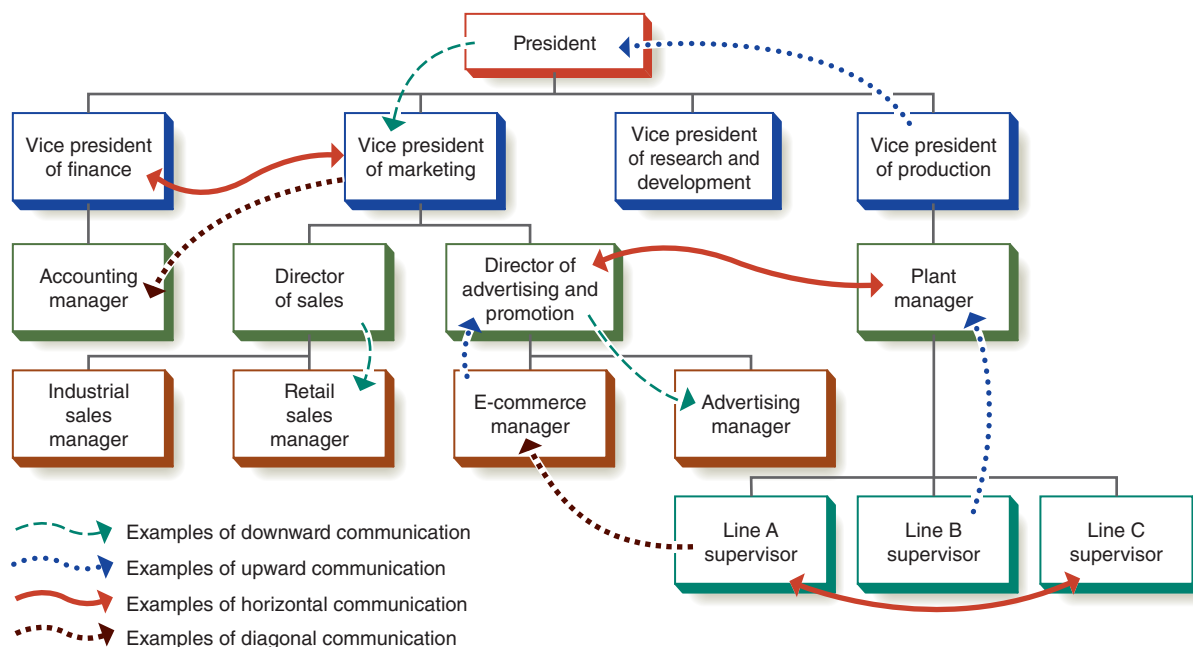


Figure 1.4 Formal Communication Network

The formal communication network is defined by the relationships between the various job positions in the organization. Messages can flow upward (from a lower-level employee to a higher-level employee), downward (from a higher-level employee to a lower-level employee), horizontally (across the organization, between employees at the same or similar levels), or diagonally (across departments and upward or downward).

grievances, and performance. *Horizontal* or *lateral communication* flows between departments to help employees share information, coordinate tasks, and solve complex problems. Finally, with *diagonal communication*, information crosses department lines while moving up or down.⁷ When problems and opportunities span multiple departments, horizontal and diagonal flows can help ensure that communication doesn't get stifled moving up and down the vertical lines in the organization chart.⁸

Every organization also has an **informal communication network**, which encompasses all communication that occurs outside of formal channels. Some of this informal communication takes place naturally when employees interact on the job and in social settings, and some of it takes place when the formal network doesn't provide information that employees want. In fact, the limitations of formal communication networks helped spur the growth of social media in the business environment. Communication in the informal network is healthy and important because the formal network can't always capture and share all the information that helps people do their jobs. However, if a workplace is rife with rumors and company gossip, this situation could be a sign that the formal network is not functioning effectively.

informal communication network All communication that takes place outside the formal network

ADOPTING AN AUDIENCE-CENTERED APPROACH

An **audience-centered approach** involves understanding and respecting the members of your audience and making every effort to get your message across in a way that is meaningful to them. This approach is also known as adopting the **“you” attitude**, where *you* is the person receiving the message, in contrast to messages that are about *me* as the sender. Learn as much as possible about the beliefs, education, age, status, communication style, and personal and professional concerns of your readers and listeners. If you're addressing people you don't know and you're unable to find out more about them, try to project yourself into their position by using common sense and imagination.

Relating to the needs of others is a key part of *emotional intelligence*, the ability to read other people's emotions accurately and to manage one's own emotions in productive ways.⁹ The more you know about the people you're communicating with, the easier it will be to focus on their needs—which, in turn, will make it easier for them to hear your message, understand it, and respond positively. A vital element of audience-centered communication is professional *etiquette*, which you'll study in Chapter 3.

audience-centered approach Understanding and respecting the members of your audience and making every effort to get your message across in a way that is meaningful to them; also known as adopting the “you” attitude

“you” attitude Communicating with an audience-centered approach; creating messages that are about “you,” the receiver, rather than “me,” the sender

Exploring the Communication Process

Even with the best intentions, communication efforts can fail. Messages can get lost or simply ignored. The receiver of a message can interpret it in ways the sender never imagined. Two people receiving the same information can reach different conclusions about what it means.

Fortunately, by understanding communication as a process with distinct steps, you can improve the odds that your messages will reach their intended audiences and produce their intended effects. This section explores the communication process in two stages: first by following a message from one sender to one receiver in the conventional communication model and then by expanding on that approach with multiple messages and participants in the social communication model. (A note on terminology: Throughout the book, *message* is used in both the general sense of “a bundle of information,” regardless of form, and the specific sense of instant messages or other brief message formats. You'll be able to tell from the context which meaning is intended.)

3 LEARNING OBJECTIVE
Contrast the conventional communication process model with the social communication model.

THE CONVENTIONAL COMMUNICATION MODEL

By viewing communication as a process (Figure 1.5), you can identify and improve the skills you need in order to be more successful. Many variations on this process model exist, but these eight steps provide a practical overview:

1. **The sender has an idea.** Whether a communication effort will ultimately be effective starts right here and depends on the nature of the idea and the motivation for sending

message The “container” for an idea to be transmitted from a sender to a receiver

encoding Putting an idea into a message (words, images, or a combination of both)

communication medium
The form in which a message is presented; can be oral (spoken), written, or visual

communication channels
Systems used to deliver messages

decoding Extracting the idea from a message

feedback Information from receivers back to senders regarding the quality and effectiveness of a message

it. For example, if your motivation is to offer a solution to a problem, you have a better chance of crafting a meaningful message than if your motivation is merely to complain about a problem.

2. **The sender encodes the idea as a message.** When senders put an idea into a **message**—which you can think of as the “container” for an idea—they are **encoding** it, or expressing it in words or images. Much of the focus of this course is on developing the skills needed to encode your ideas into effective messages.
3. **The sender produces the message in a transmittable medium.** With the appropriate message to express an idea, the sender now needs a **communication medium** to present that message to the intended audience. Media can be divided into oral (spoken), written, or visual formats.
4. **The sender transmits the message through a channel.** Technology continues to increase the number of **communication channels** you can use to transmit your messages. The distinction between medium and channel can get a bit murky, but think of the medium as the *form* a message takes (such as a written message) and the channel as the system used to *deliver* the message (such as Twitter or email). (Reflecting common usage and as a matter of convenience, this book occasionally uses the terms *digital media* and *social media* to refer to categories of channels that can transmit oral, written, and visual messages.)
5. **The audience receives the message.** If the channel functions properly, the message reaches its intended receivers in the target audience. However, mere arrival at the destination is no guarantee that the message will be noticed or understood correctly. As “How Audiences Receive Messages” explains, many messages are either ignored or misinterpreted.
6. **The audience decodes the message.** After a message is received, the receiver needs to extract the idea from the message, a step known as **decoding**. “How Audiences Decode Messages” takes a closer look at this complex and subtle step in the process.
7. **The audience responds to the message.** By crafting messages in ways that show the benefits of responding, senders can increase the chances that recipients will respond in positive ways. However, as “How Audiences Respond to Messages” points out, whether a receiver responds as the sender hopes depends on the receiver (a) *remembering* the message long enough to act on it, (b) being *able* to act on it, and (c) being *motivated* to respond.
8. **The audience provides feedback to the sender.** In addition to responding (or not responding) to the message, audience members may give **feedback** that helps the sender evaluate the effectiveness of the communication effort. Feedback can be verbal (using written or spoken words), nonverbal (using gestures, facial expressions, or other signals), or both. Just like the original message, however, this feedback from the receiver also needs to be decoded carefully. A smile, for example, can have many meanings.

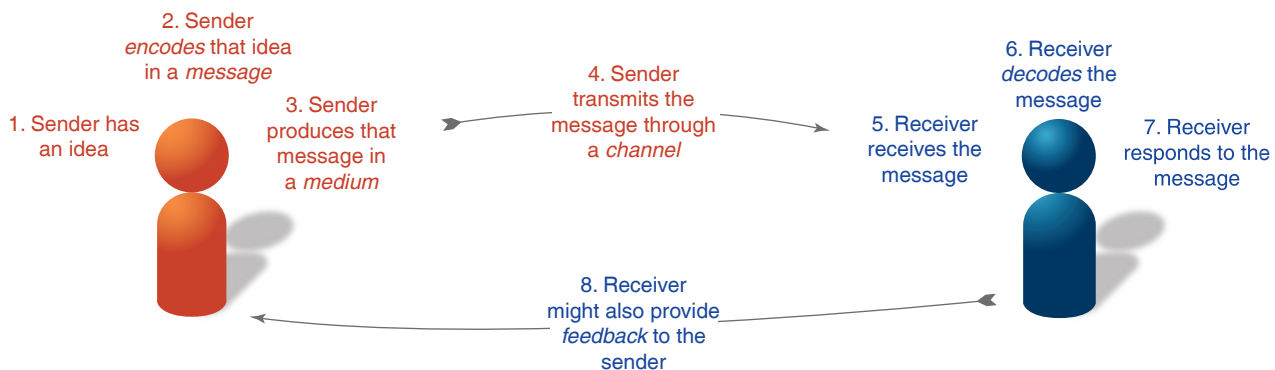


Figure 1.5 The Conventional Communication Process

This eight-step model is a simplified view of one cycle of communication. In reality, the process is complicated with noise, barriers, and interruptions, but understanding the basic concepts of encoding and decoding will help you as a sender and as a receiver.

Keep in mind that this description captures only one cycle of the communication process. A conversational exchange (in person, on the phone, or through a digital channel) could include dozens of these cycles before the sender and the receiver achieve a satisfactory transfer of information and understanding. Clear writing and speaking help reduce the number of cycles needed to achieve shared understanding, which is why these skills are so valuable in the business world.

Considering the complexity of this process—and the barriers and distractions that often stand between sender and receiver—it should come as no surprise that communication efforts often fail to achieve the sender's objective. Fortunately, the better you understand the process, the more successful you'll be.

The following sections take a closer look at two important aspects of the process: environmental barriers that can block or distort messages and the steps audiences take to receive, decode, and respond to messages.

BARRIERS IN THE COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

Within any communication environment, messages can be disrupted by a variety of **communication barriers**. These barriers include noise and distractions, competing messages, filters, and channel breakdowns:

- **Noise and distractions.** External distractions range from uncomfortable meeting rooms to message alerts popping up on your device screen while you're trying to read or write. Internal distractions are thoughts and emotions that prevent audiences from focusing on incoming messages. The common habit of *multitasking*—attempting more than one task at a time—is practically guaranteed to create barriers when communication is involved because the human brain simply isn't wired to work that way. You may think you are doing two or more tasks at once, but you are really shifting back and forth between individual tasks, and your productivity and focus can suffer every time you shift.¹⁰ As more communication takes place on mobile devices and in unconventional locations such as home offices, the need to insulate yourself from noise and distractions will keep growing.
- **Competing messages.** Having your audience's undivided attention is a rare luxury. In most cases, you must compete with other messages that are trying to reach your audience at the same time.
- **Filters.** Messages can be blocked or distorted by *filters*, any human or technological interventions between the sender and the receiver. Filtering can be both intentional (such as automatically filing incoming messages based on sender or content) or unintentional (such as an overly aggressive spam filter that traps legitimate emails). The structure and culture of an organization can also inhibit the flow of vital messages. And, in some cases, the people or companies you rely on to deliver your message can distort it or filter it to meet their own needs.
- **Channel breakdowns.** Sometimes the channel simply breaks down and fails to deliver your message at all. A colleague you were counting on to speak to someone on your behalf might have forgotten to do so, or a web service outage might have prevented messages from going through.

Everyone in an organization can help minimize barriers and distractions. As a communicator, try to be aware of any barriers that could prevent your messages from reaching their intended audiences. If you move into management, keep an eye out for any organizational barriers that could be inhibiting the flow of information. In any situation, a small dose of common sense and courtesy goes a long way. Mute your phone's ringer before you step into a meeting. Don't talk across the tops of other people's cubicles, and don't play music at a level that can distract others.

Finally, take steps to insulate yourself from distractions. Don't let messages interrupt you every minute of the day, for example, unless your job requires you to respond right away. Instead, set aside time to attend to messages all at once so that you can focus the rest of the time.

communication barriers

Forces or events that can disrupt communication, including noise and distractions, competing messages, filters, and channel breakdowns

INSIDE THE MIND OF YOUR AUDIENCE

After a message works its way through the communication channel and reaches the intended audience, it encounters a whole new set of challenges. Understanding how audiences receive, decode, and respond to messages will help you create more effective messages.

How Audiences Receive Messages

For an audience member to receive a message, three events need to occur: The receiver has to *sense* the presence of a message, *select* it from all the other messages clamoring for attention, and *perceive* it as an actual message (as opposed to random, pointless noise).¹¹ You can appreciate the magnitude of this challenge by walking down any busy street in a commercial section of town. You will encounter hundreds of messages—billboards, posters, store window displays, music, people talking, car horns, street signs, traffic lights, and so on. However, you will sense, select, and perceive only a fraction of these messages.

Today's business audiences are much like pedestrians on busy streets. They are inundated with so many messages and so much noise that they can miss or ignore many of the messages intended for them. One of the mind's defenses against this barrage is **selective attention**, which is focusing on a subset of the incoming stimuli or information sources and ignoring others.¹² Not surprisingly, this focused attention can be helpful at times and harmful at others. If you are on your mobile phone struggling to listen to the other party, your mind will try to block out all the noise sources—one of which might be a car horn warning you to get out of the way.

Throughout this course, you will learn a variety of techniques to craft messages that get noticed. In general, follow these five principles to increase your chances of success:

- **Consider audience expectations.** Deliver messages using the media and channels that the audience expects. If colleagues expect meeting notices to be delivered through the workplace messaging system, don't suddenly switch gears and start delivering the notices via email without telling anyone. Of course, sometimes going *against* expectations can stimulate audience attention, which is why advertisers sometimes do wacky and creative things to get noticed. For most business communication efforts, however, following the expectations of your audience is the most efficient way to get your message across.
- **Make messages user-friendly.** Even if audiences are actively looking or listening for your messages, they may not get the messages if you make them hard to find, hard to navigate, or hard to read.
- **Emphasize familiarity.** Use words, images, and designs that are familiar to your audience. For example, company websites usually put information about the company on a page called "About" or "About Us," so many visitors expect to see such information on a page with this title.
- **Practice empathy.** Make sure your messages speak to the audience by clearly addressing *their* wants and needs—not just yours. This is the essence of the "you" attitude.
- **Design for compatibility.** Make sure your messages are compatible with the devices your audiences will use to read, listen to, or view them on. For example, websites designed for full-size computer screens can be difficult to view on mobile devices, so contemporary web design emphasizes the need to support a wide variety of screen sizes and modes of interaction.

How Audiences Decode Messages

A received message doesn't "mean" anything until the recipient decodes it and assigns meaning to it, and there is no guarantee the receiver will assign the same meaning the sender intended. Assigning meaning through decoding is a highly personal process influenced by culture, individual experience, learning and thinking styles, ego, hopes, fears, beliefs, and even temporary moods.

To truly receive a message, audience members need to sense it, select it, and then perceive it as a message.

selective attention Focusing on some of the incoming stimuli or information sources while ignoring others

Decoding is a complex process; receivers often extract different meanings from messages than senders attempted to encode in their messages.

Our minds have a variety of self-defense mechanisms that protect our perceptions of the world and of ourselves, and our minds sometimes ignore, deny, or distort incoming information that threatens those views. If you have ever used the phrase “You only hear what you want to hear,” you were referring to an example of this distorted perception. For example, if you ask four people to review a business plan that you believe is rather brilliant and three of the appraisals come back positive, your ego will be tempted to reject the negative comments in the fourth review.

Differences in language and usage also influence received meaning. If you ask an employee to send you a report on sales figures “as soon as possible,” does that mean within 10 seconds, 10 minutes, or 10 days? By clarifying expectations and resolving potential ambiguities in your messages, you can minimize such uncertainties.

Individual thinking styles are another important factor in message decoding. For instance, someone who places a high value on objective analysis and clear logic might interpret a message differently than someone who values emotion or intuition (reaching conclusions without using rational processes).

In general, the more experiences you share with another person, the more likely you are to share your perceptions of the world and therefore arrive at the same meanings for a given message (see Figure 1.6). Careful audience analysis helps you understand how much of this overlap you have with your readers or listeners. The less shared experience you have with your audiences, the more background information and context you will need to provide in your messages.

How Audiences Respond to Messages

Your message has been delivered, received, and correctly decoded. Now what? Will audience members respond in the way you’d like them to? Only if three events occur.

First, the recipient must *remember* the message long enough to act on it. Simplifying greatly, memory works in several stages: *Sensory memory* momentarily captures incoming data from the senses; then whatever sensory data the recipient pays attention to are transferred to *short-term memory*. Information survives in short-term memory for only a matter of seconds and will disappear or get crowded out by new information if it isn’t transferred to *long-term memory*. This transfer can be done either actively (such as when a person memorizes a list of items) or passively (such as when a new piece of information connects with something else the recipient already has stored in long-term memory). Finally, the information needs to be *retrieved* when the recipient wants to act on it.¹³ By communicating in ways that reflect the audience’s wants and needs, you increase the chance that your messages will be remembered and retrieved.

Second, the recipient must be *able* to respond as you wish. Obviously, if recipients simply cannot do what you want them to do, your message will not have the intended effect. By understanding your audience (you’ll learn more about audience analysis in Chapter 5), you can work to minimize these unsuccessful outcomes.

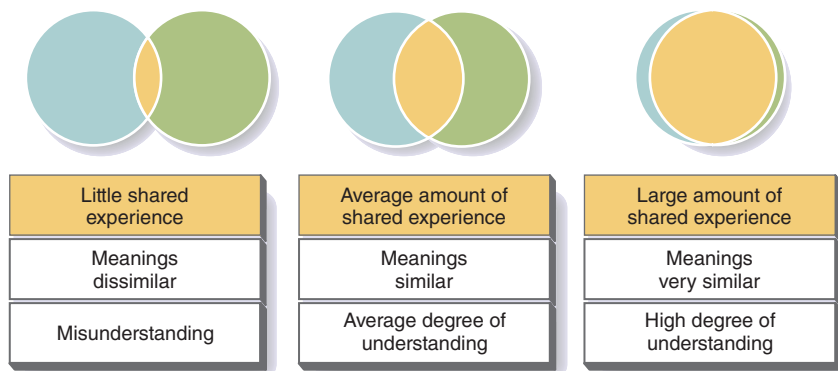


Figure 1.6 How Shared Experience Affects Understanding

The more two people or two groups of people share experiences—personal, professional, and cultural—the more likely it is that receivers will extract the intended meanings that senders encode into the messages.

Third, the recipient must be *motivated* to respond. You'll encounter many situations in which your audience has the option of responding but isn't required to. For instance, a record company may or may not offer your band a contract, or your boss may or may not respond to your request for a raise. Throughout this course, you'll learn techniques for crafting messages that can help motivate readers to respond positively to your messages.

THE SOCIAL COMMUNICATION MODEL

The conventional model presented in Figure 1.5 illustrates how a single idea moves from one sender to one receiver. In a larger sense, it also helps represent the traditional nature of much business communication, which was primarily defined by a *publishing* or *broadcasting* mindset. Externally, a company issued carefully scripted messages to a mass audience that often had few options for responding to those messages or initiating conversations of their own. Customers and other interested parties had few ways to connect with one another to ask questions, share information, or offer support. Internally, communication tended to follow the same “we talk, you listen” model, with upper managers issuing directives to lower-level supervisors and employees.

However, a variety of technologies have enabled and inspired a new approach to business communication. In contrast to the publishing or broadcasting mindset, this **social communication model** is interactive, conversational, and usually open to all who wish to participate. Audience members are no longer passive recipients of messages but active participants in a conversation. Social media have given customers and other stakeholders a voice they did not have in the past.

Instead of transmitting a fixed message, a sender in a social media environment initiates a conversation by asking a question or sharing valuable information. Information spread this way is often revised and reshaped by the participants as they forward it and comment on it. People can expand it, confirm it, amplify it, or refute it, depending on their needs and interests. Figure 1.7 lists some of the significant differences between the traditional and social models of business communication.

social communication model

An interactive, conversational approach to communication in which audience members are empowered to participate fully

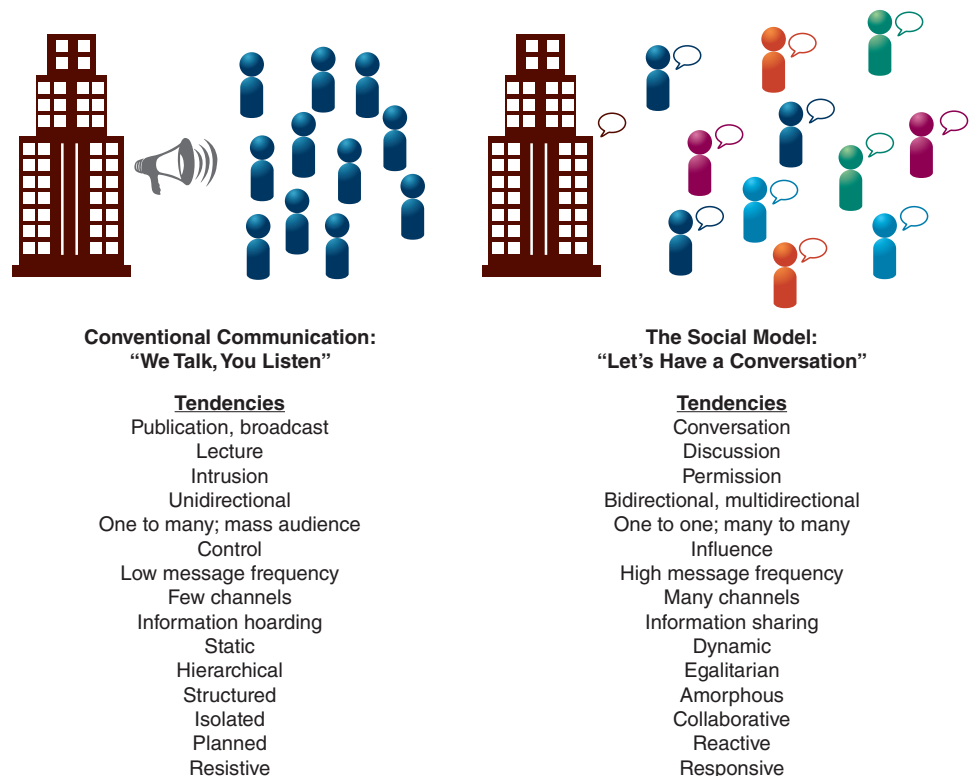


Figure 1.7 The Social Communication Model

The social communication model differs from conventional communication strategies and practices in a number of significant ways.

The social communication model offers many advantages, but it has some disadvantages as well, starting with less control. People inside and outside a company have always been able to refute management statements or spread rumors, for example, but owners and managers could assert at least a degree of control because the options for everyone else were usually limited and often expensive. Now that more stakeholders have a say in the conversation via social media, they can use the megaphone power of the crowd to shape public perceptions in significant ways, such as arranging boycotts of companies whose policies they disagree with or influencing where and how companies advertise. In recent years, companies have found themselves drawn into social media discussions on such topics as vaccine and mask mandates, reproductive health policies, and other issues where public opinion can be sharply divided. In the past, company leaders may have been able to sit on the sidelines when it came to public debate, but there appears to be increasing expectation among stakeholders for executives to share and sometimes defend company politics and positions.

A second potential disadvantage of the social model is complexity. Companies and individuals have access to more information than ever before, which is both positive and negative. On the negative side, there are more communication channels to monitor, more work is needed to separate valuable information from noise, there is a greater risk of the spread of false information, and there is a greater threat of information overload (discussed in the next section).

Using Technology to Improve Communication

Contemporary business communication is a technology-enabled activity, and your success as a communicator will depend on your comfort and skill with the various tools you'll have at your disposal. You are already using some of these tools, and you will be able to adapt your experience with various forms of digital and social media to workplace communication.

Communication technology saved the day during the pandemic, as companies scrambled to implement remote-communication links to keep their operations going. As you'll read in Chapter 3—and no doubt experienced yourself with remote learning—long-distance communication presents significant challenges for everyone involved. With many companies settling into hybrid work models (with some workers in the office and some at home), the ability to communicate and collaborate using technology is now essential.

THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Technology brings a wide variety of benefits to business communication, which can be grouped into five key areas:

1. Making communication more effective by helping people craft messages that convey their ideas more clearly and persuasively
2. Making communication more efficient by reducing the time and effort needed to create, transmit, and consume messages
3. Improving research tools to help communicators discover, process, and apply information
4. Assisting communicators with decision-making by guiding them through complex sets of data
5. Removing communication barriers to enable more people to participate in the communication process and to create experiences not possible in the physical world

You probably take advantage of many benefits provided by communication technology already, from spell checkers to search engines to a voice-input virtual assistant on a smartphone. Throughout the book, you'll see examples of both simple and esoteric technologies that deliver these benefits, including in the special feature "Empowering Communicators with Intelligent Communication Technology."

4 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE**
Identify five major benefits of business communication technology and three major innovations that are reshaping the practice of communication.

While technology can help communicators in some powerful ways, these benefits don't come automatically. When tools are designed poorly or used inappropriately, they can hinder communication more than help. To use communication technology effectively, bear these five points in mind:

- **Keep technology in perspective.** Any technology is simply a tool, a means by which you can accomplish certain tasks. Technology is an aid to communication, not a replacement for it. Moreover, it can get in the way if not used thoughtfully. Throughout the book, you'll see advice on keeping the focus on your messages and your audiences and on using technology to enhance the communication process without overwhelming it.
- **Guard against information overload.** The overuse or misuse of communication technology can lead to **information overload**, in which people receive more information than they can effectively process. Information overload can cause distractions, stress, mistakes, and communication breakdowns, and minimizing it is a shared responsibility. As a receiver, be your own gatekeeper and stay mindful of what information you allow in. Periodically "prune" your information channels to avoid material you no longer need, and use filtering features in your systems to isolate high-priority messages that deserve your attention. As a sender, make sure you don't send unnecessary messages or poorly crafted messages that require multiple rounds of clarification.
- **Use your tools wisely.** Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other technologies are key parts of what has been called the *information technology paradox*, in which information tools can waste as much time as they save. In addition to distracting employees from work responsibilities, inappropriate use can also leave companies vulnerable to lawsuits and security breaches.
- **Use your tools efficiently.** Knowing how to use your tools efficiently can make a big difference in your productivity. You don't have to become an expert in most cases, but you do need to be familiar with the basic features and functions of the tools you are expected to use on the job. If you move into management, make sure your employees are trained to use the systems you expect them to use.
- **Reconnect with people.** Even when it is working well, communication technology can still present barriers to understanding and healthy emotional connections. Messaging, email, and other text-heavy modes are particularly prone to misunderstandings and bruised feelings because they can't convey nuances and emotions the same way that voice, video, and in-person conversation can. Whenever you sense that you're stuck in a loop of confusion or ill will, pick up the phone or visit the other party in person if you can. A few minutes of direct conversation can often work wonders.

information overload Condition in which people receive more information than they can effectively process

THE SPECTRUM OF CONTEMPORARY COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

This section offers a look at three sets of technology that you will encounter in your job search and in the workplace: social and workgroup communication systems, mobile communication, and intelligent communication technologies.

Social and Workgroup Communication Systems

One of the most distinguishing features of business communication these days is how connected everyone and everything is. Businesses have had access to digital networking for decades, and many were quick to adopt social networking concepts when Facebook and similar networks took off. **Social media** are digital platforms that empower stakeholders as participants in the communication process by allowing them to share content, revise content, respond to content, or contribute new content. Millions of companies now use public networks such as Facebook and Twitter to connect with customers, and many also have private, internal social networks that are restricted to employees and selected business partners. These private systems are often enhanced with shared file access, group messaging, and real-time collaboration capabilities for brainstorming, reviewing and revising documents, and virtual meetings. If you use social media now, you'll have a basic familiarity with how many of these systems work. You can read more about collaboration systems in Chapter 3 and business uses of social networking in Chapter 8.

social media Digital platforms that empower stakeholders as participants in the communication process by allowing them to share content, revise content, respond to content, or contribute new content

Mobile Communication

While social media tools are freeing communication from the constraints of closed networks, mobile connectivity is freeing it from the constraints of fixed location. As consumers and businesses alike increasingly rely on phones, tablets, and hybrid tablet/PCs, more than half of all internet traffic now occurs on mobile devices.¹⁴ The growing availability of 5G wireless, with its vastly greater bandwidth, promises to give businesses the speed and capacity for data-hungry applications from high-resolution video to real-time data analytics.

For many companies, mobile technology has become an essential part of the digital workplace. Mobile connectivity can give workers greater flexibility to meet their personal and professional obligations, enhance productivity and collaboration, and create more-engaging experiences for customers and other users. And rather than being an accessory to or an extension of a traditional work computer, in many cases mobile devices are the primary interface that connects employees to the company's information networks.¹⁵

Business mobile communication involves many of the same communication tools that you may use now for messaging, social networking, researching, and writing. In addition, thousands of business-focused apps assist users with everything from presentations to project management to financial reporting. Many of these apps are either communication focused or have significant communication features, all designed to help employees stay connected no matter where their work takes them (see Figure 1.8). For example, with Rockwell Automation's FactoryTalk TeamONE app, teams can collaborate to diagnose problems on a production line using the app's measurement capabilities to acquire data from machinery and then using its communication tools to collaborate on the troubleshooting process.¹⁶

The rise of mobile communication has some obvious implications for business professionals, starting with the challenges of writing and reading on small screens. Documents that are easy to read on paper or on large screens can become quite difficult to read on a phone—and the more difficult the reading experience, the more likely that readers will misinterpret the message or simply stop reading. (*Phablets*, devices that are larger than phones but not as big as tablets, are increasingly popular, but even these still present challenges for reading and writing.)

Moreover, device size and portability are only the most obvious differences. Just as with social media, the changes brought about by mobile communication go far deeper than the technology itself. Mobile alters the way people live and work, which requires communicators to modify their approach to writing and designing messages. For example, smartphones have become truly personal devices in ways that personal computers never did. For many users, the connection is so intense they may feel a sense of panic when they don't have frequent access to their phones.¹⁷ When people are closely attached to their phones, day and night, they are more closely connected to all the information sources, conversations, and networks that those phones can reach. As a result, mobile communication can start to resemble a continuous stream of conversations that never quite end, which influences the

Mobile alters the way people live and work, which requires communicators to modify their approach.

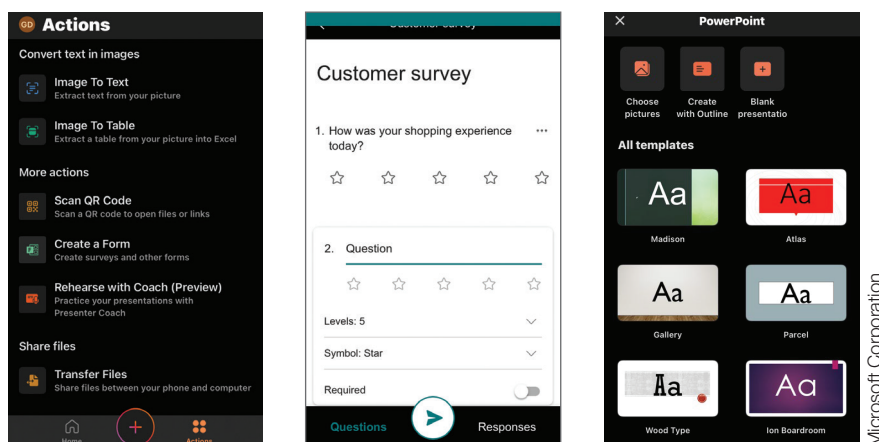


Figure 1.8 Mobile Communication Tools

Mobile technologies offer multiple ways to improve communication and other key business processes.

way businesses need to interact with their stakeholders. You can read more about writing for mobile audiences in Chapter 6 and designing mobile-friendly messages in Chapter 7. Throughout the book, you'll also see advice on using mobile in specific tasks, such as using mobile devices in presentations and job searches.

Intelligent Communication Technology

intelligent communication technology (ICT) Systems that use artificial intelligence to enhance the communication experience

The latest developments in contemporary communication tools are an intriguing group of capabilities we can call **intelligent communication technology (ICT)**, which uses artificial intelligence to enhance the communication experience. Although “artificial intelligence” still has a science fiction ring to it, forms of AI are now used extensively in business and business communication. If you use streaming media services, shop online, use social media, or seek tech support, it's a virtual guarantee that you are already experiencing AI as a consumer. Amazon, Apple, Meta (Facebook and Instagram), Google, Microsoft, Netflix, and Spotify are just a few of the companies that rely on AI to deliver their services.¹⁸ In a professional context, you will probably use various other forms of AI on the job, and chances are good that you will encounter it during your job search process (although its use may not be visible to you).

Research in AI has been going on for more than a half-century, but the practical outcomes never really lived up to hopes until recently, when several developments converged within the space of a few years. First, the primary focus for most researchers shifted from pursuing the generalized, humanlike intelligence of science fiction, sometimes called artificial general intelligence (AGI) or *strong AI*, to developing specialized systems aimed at handling specific tasks such as reading text or recognizing images, techniques considered *narrow AI* or *weak AI*. Second, an AI method involving *neural networks*, which emulate the function of neurons in the brain, was refined in a way that made it much more powerful. And third, several critical computer capabilities became available around the same time: massive sets of data that AI systems could learn from, low-cost storage to handle all that data, and fast processors capable of handling the number-crunching that the most common AI approaches require.¹⁹

Thanks to these developments, commercial applications of AI are exploding, and many of these involve business communication. ICT in its various forms relies on a few fundamental AI techniques that you'll hear about from time to time. You don't necessarily need to know how any of these techniques work, but it helps to have an idea of the capabilities they bring to communication:

- **Machine learning and deep learning.** For any AI system to possess intelligence, it needs to be able to learn, which can include understanding text, converting spoken language to written text, or recognizing the content of photographs and videos. *Machine learning* refers to the general capability of computers to learn without explicit human input, and *deep learning* is a specific type of machine learning that uses layers of neural networks to attack problems at multiple levels (the “deep” part). The growth of practical AI tools in recent years, including the ICT tools available for business communication, is largely the result of advances in machine learning.²⁰ (Companies frequently use the term *MLOps*, short for *machine learning operations*, which is the effort to bring together all the tools and techniques needed to use machine learning.)
- **Natural language processing (NLP).** NLP involves giving computers the ability to understand language in the often unpredictable (“natural”) ways humans speak and write and to manipulate language in useful ways. NLP involves several challenging issues, including converting speech to text, analyzing text to extract intended meaning, and generating written or oral output (often referred to as *natural language generation*). NLP is a fundamental part of AI-based business communication, powering everything from chatbots and voice assistants to smart editors and automated translation tools.²¹
- **Computer vision.** In much the same way that NLP pieces together sounds and bits of language to figure out meaning, computer vision analyzes the elements of photos, videos, and live camera images to identify their content. Given how important visual communication has become in business, vision processing is beginning to play a key role in business communication. It is also becoming one of the most controversial of new AI methods, as facial recognition technology becomes more widely used in law enforcement and identity verification. Criticisms include problems with racial and gender bias and invasion of privacy.²²

“Empowering Communicators with Intelligent Communication Technology” shows a variety of ICT tools used in business today. And throughout the book, keep an eye out for the “Intelligent Communication Technology” highlight boxes that discuss specific tools for business communication—including tools that you can use or that you might encounter while searching for your next job.

Committing to Ethical and Legal Communication

Ethics are the accepted principles of right and wrong that govern behavior and decision-making within a society. Ethical behavior is a companywide concern, but because communication efforts are the public face of a company, they are subjected to particularly rigorous scrutiny from regulators, legislators, investors, consumer groups, environmental groups, labor organizations, and other stakeholders. **Ethical communication** includes all the information an audience needs in order to make an informed decision or take an informed stance on an issue and is not deceptive in any way. Whenever you communicate in business, you ask audiences to trust that you will provide information that is complete and true. If you intentionally violate that trust, you have engaged in unethical communication. In addition to providing truthful content, business professionals also must be aware of ethical issues regarding unintended consequences and privacy.

FORMS OF UNETHICAL COMMUNICATION

Unethical communication can take several forms: withholding information, distorting information, plagiarizing, ignoring negative consequences, and violating privacy. Note that some of these choices can also be illegal in certain circumstances.

Withholding Information

Intentionally withholding information can be unethical if it prevents the recipient from acting or deciding in an informed manner. This can range from not telling customers about a product’s safety risks to an employee failing to mention schedule or budget problems in a status report.

The growth of digital and social media has increased the attention given to the issue of **transparency**, which in this context refers to a sense of openness, of giving all participants in a conversation access to the information they need to accurately process the messages they are receiving. In addition to the integrity of the information itself, audiences deserve to know when they are being marketed to and who is behind the messages they read or hear.

Two important concerns in this regard are *native advertising* and *stealth marketing*. Native advertising, also known as *sponsored content*, is advertising material that is designed to look like regular news stories or website articles. On many news websites, for instance, including those owned by newspapers and websites affiliated with cable and broadcast television outlets, you can see advertising material that is nearly indistinguishable from legitimate news articles. In the United States, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) requires anyone who publishes such material to label it in specific ways, such as with an “ad” or “sponsored” tag, to avoid misleading consumers.²⁸

Similarly, *stealth marketing* refers to communication activities that are really marketing efforts in disguise. In its broadest definition, stealth marketing can include such common tactics as *product placement* (paying to have products displayed or used in movies, TV shows, and video games) and *guerrilla marketing* (various creative tactics such as leaving giant replicas of a product in public places), but the specific issue of concern here involves unethical product-related communication in which the communicator fails to disclose a relationship with the company that sells the product. For instance, if a celebrity you follow on Twitter posts an enthusiastic statement about a particular product or vacation resort, how can you tell if this is an innocent social media comment or an advertisement in disguise?

To protect the interests of consumers, the FTC has transparency regulations that apply to **social media influencers**, social media users who can influence buyer behavior by virtue

5 LEARNING OBJECTIVE
Define *ethics*, identify five forms of unethical communication, explain the difference between an ethical dilemma and an ethical lapse, and list five guidelines for making ethical communication choices.

ethics The accepted principles of right and wrong that govern behavior within a society

ethical communication
Communication that includes all the information an audience needs in order to make an informed decision or take an informed stance on an issue, is not deceptive in any way, considers unintended consequences, and does not violate privacy

transparency A sense of openness that gives all participants in a conversation access to the information they need to accurately process the messages they are receiving

social media influencers Social media users who can influence buyer behavior by virtue of their reputation for expertise, their celebrity, or the number of followers they have

(continued on page 62)

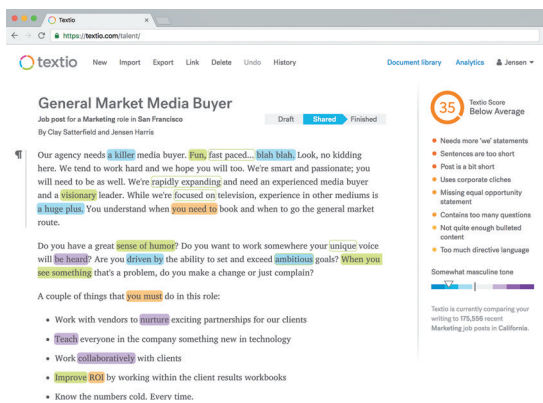
Empowering Communicators with Intelligent Communication Technology

Artificial intelligence is now being applied to nearly every facet of business, and many of these innovations focus on business communication. Here is a sample of the intelligent communication technologies that deliver the five key benefits listed earlier in the chapter. You have no doubt encountered some of these already, and you will probably encounter more of them during your job search and in the workplace.²³

Making Communication More Effective

These tools help communicators make more-compelling choices by offering suggestions and providing feedback or by enhancing the audience experience with additional information.

Augmented writing systems analyze word and phrase choices to suggest more effective or more culturally inclusive ways to convey ideas. Some are based on general concepts of effective writing; others are specialized tools based on a deeper analysis of narrower sets of communication examples, such as job descriptions.



Courtesy of Textio

Smart proofreading tools analyze documents for consistency and compliance with a company's in-house style guide or common standards such as the widely followed *Chicago Manual of Style*.



ZoFo/Shutterstock

Augmented reality tools enhance the communication experience for audiences by delivering additional information that is relevant to a user's immediate surroundings, such as letting retailers envision store layout changes.

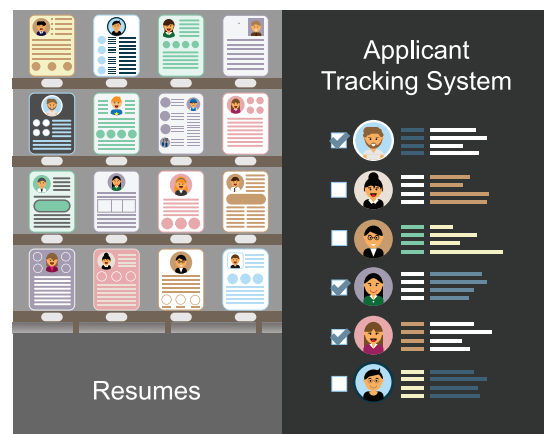


Aleksei Gorodentkov/123RF

Making Communication More Efficient

The goal of these tools is to reduce the time and effort for both senders and receivers by assisting—or in some cases replacing—a human participant.

Applicant evaluation systems speed the process of screening job applications, particularly in the first few stages of the recruiting cycle, when companies often have more candidates than their staffs can screen manually. Some of these systems evaluate résumés and related application information to help recruiters identify the most promising candidates, and some can even predict whether people who aren't actively looking for a new job might be likely to consider one. Others assist at the interviewing stage, with chatbots that can conduct interviews or video analysis tools that evaluate candidates' responses and on-screen demeanor.



Piscine26/Shutterstock

Automated writing goes beyond augmented writing to produce finished or near-finished writing. Systems in use now can summarize corporate news, write sports recaps, generate insurance reports, write product descriptions for e-commerce websites, document data analysis results, and perform other basic writing tasks.²⁴



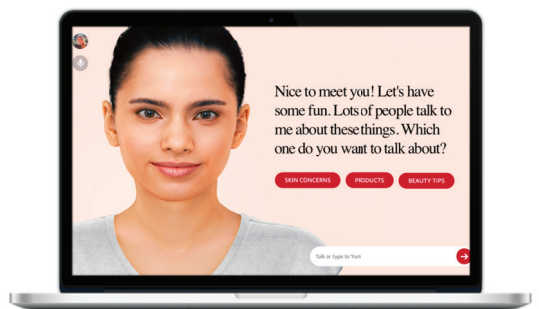
LightField Studios/Shutterstock

Chatbots and taskbots interact with humans to perform a wide variety of communication functions, from answering questions about products to acting as personal assistants. Texting bots such as Maya from the insurance company Lemonade help companies communicate with more people at lower cost.



Chaay_Tee/Shutterstock

Digital agents take the text-based chatbot concept to another level entirely with humanlike, AI-generated agents that converse with customers in live video sessions much as real human agents would. Soul Machine's Digital People currently "work" in customer service, technical support, retail, and other business functions.²⁵

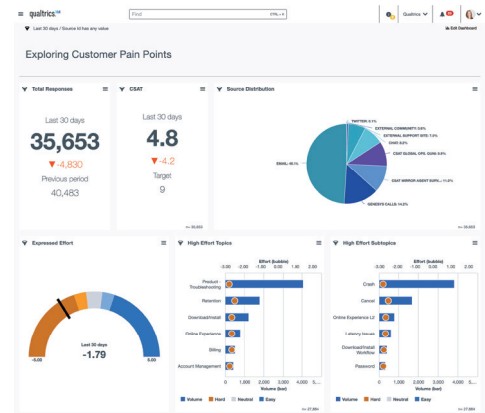


Courtesy of Soul Machines

Improving Research

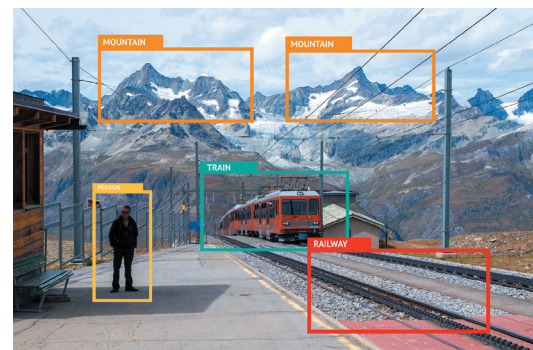
Business communication projects often require research, which can involve numerical data, textual content, or visuals (photos, videos, live camera feeds, and so on). When the research involves large amounts of material, ICT tools can help communicators by automating the collection and analysis tasks and by discovering connections and insights that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Mining and analytics systems are a diverse class of tools that extract insights from collections of numerical (*data mining*, *data analytics*) or textual (*text mining*, *text analytics*) content. Business communicators can use the natural language processing capability of text mining or text analytics for *social listening* to identify themes (such as prevailing customer sentiment or threats to a company's reputation) hidden in mountains of written information, from Twitter and Facebook posts to customer emails and surveys.



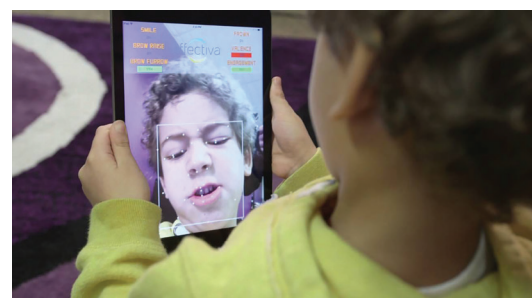
Courtesy of Qualtrics

Image recognition systems extract information from photos, videos, and live camera images. Search engines, for example, use AI to automatically analyze and tag photos and videos for such purposes as filtering out objectionable content and helping users search for images. This capability can be built into other systems for such purposes as tracking products, counting people, and monitoring public safety.



JIRAROU PRADITCHAROENKUL/Alamy Stock Photo

Emotion recognition tools such as Affectiva's analyze facial expressions or voices to identify emotional states with the aims of understanding consumer reactions and preferences at a deeper level and bringing a more human feel to digital interaction.

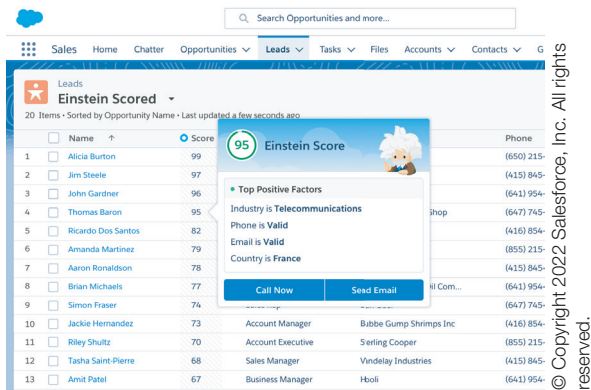


Affectiva, Inc. A Smart Eye Company

Enhancing and Automating Decision-Making

A variety of ICT solutions focus on decision-making, which relates closely to communication efforts because professionals frequently need to make decisions about communication.

Cognitive automation, also known as *augmented intelligence*, helps professionals make more-informed decisions by applying *predictive analytics* and other techniques to characterize likely outcomes of various decision choices. Salesforce's Einstein AI, for instance, helps sales managers identify prospects most likely to make a purchase.



Robotic process automation (RPA) aims to do for knowledge work what robots do for manufacturing and other physical processes. RPA targets the high-volume “paperwork” aspects of business and can automate some of the routine communication and manual tasks that this sort of work typically involves.



Removing Communication Barriers

A variety of AI-enabled tools lower or remove communication barriers by simplifying the process of human-computer interaction or creating experiences that aren't possible in the physical world.

Voice recognition has improved dramatically in the last few years, thanks to advances in AI. Whether it's for convenience or to support people who can't use keyboard-based input methods, *voice user interface* (VUI) technology is so good now that it is becoming the primary way for millions of people to interact with digital tools and the internet in general.



Automated translation tools remove language barriers for website visitors and users. Companies can dramatically lower the costs of *localizing* content for various countries and language users, and anyone can get reasonably close translations of website content using Google Translate, Microsoft Translator, and similar services.



Real-time voice translation addresses the multiple challenges of recognizing speech, converting it to text in the original language, translating it to a second language, and then synthesizing voice output in that language.



Virtual reality (VR) systems create a simulation in which the person experiences the sensation of being in an environment, even though that environment is entirely computer-generated. If it is difficult, expensive, or dangerous to put people in a real-life situation, a VR simulation can let employees experience the sensation of being there and doing whatever tasks are required. VR can also help people experience a product or structure before it is built. Ford uses VR to let engineers “see” design ideas before building anything and to get feedback from drivers by letting them sit in and experience prototype designs before the cars are manufactured.



Gordenkoff/Shutterstock

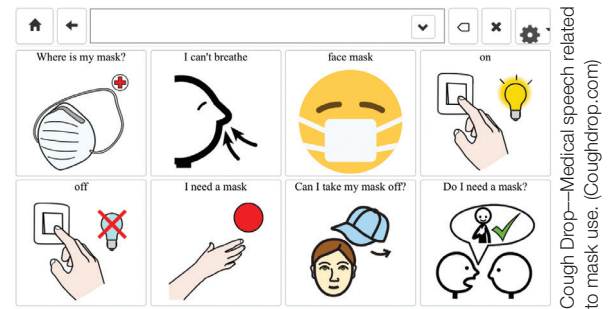
The metaverse could emerge as the ultimate way to remove communication barriers. Exactly what the metaverse means and how it will evolve are still a matter of debate and conjecture, but it could be described as reimagining the internet as an immersive, three-dimensional online environment in which people can go to work, have meetings, attend training sessions, interview for jobs, go shopping, find entertainment, and more. For instance, Accenture’s Nth Floor is a virtual office environment that the technology consulting firm uses for new employee onboarding and other functions.²⁶



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Augmented ability tools help people across a wider spectrum of physical or cognitive ability interact with devices and their immediate environments in more complete and fulfilling ways. For example, Microsoft’s Seeing AI app can help people with limited vision by reading texts, recognizing currency, identifying people, scanning barcodes, and identifying objects in a room or on the street. *Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)* is a wide range of communication methods from drawing to using pictures that can be used by people with speech limitations.²⁷ Apps such as CoughDrop let

people tap on pictures to have their phone say specific messages they would like to share.



Cough Drop—Medical speech related to mask use. (Coughdrop.com)

Essential ICT Terms

Artificial Intelligence (AI) The application of computing power to replicate one or more aspects of human intelligence. Generally speaking, it’s a three-stage process: collecting data or information, analyzing or processing that input to make decisions, and then applying the results of that decision-making activity.

Strong AI, Weak AI Terms that suggest the scope of an AI activity or design. *Strong AI*, also known as *artificial general intelligence (AGI)*, is the idea of comprehensively replicating human intelligence, including the ability to transfer learning from one task or domain to another, just as humans can. *Weak AI*, or more accurately, *narrow AI*, focuses on a specific problem with techniques optimized for that single domain. The AI tools having a meaningful impact on business today are nearly all weak AI.

Machine Learning General term for a system’s ability to teach itself to improve at whatever task or tasks it is designed to do, in contrast to systems in which all the intelligence has been built in by human programmers.

Deep Learning A form of machine learning in which layers of computational *neural networks* mimic the functions of the brain’s neurons.

Augmented Intelligence, Hybrid Intelligence, Cognitive Automation Similar terms to describe hybrid solutions in which computers assist humans, and vice versa. For example, an AI system might analyze a collection of data to help a human make a decision, or a system that runs autonomously most of the time might call for human advice when it encounters a problem it can’t solve.

Natural Language Processing (NLP) The ability to understand, analyze, and respond to human conversational input. Systems that accept voice input, such as Siri, Alexa, and other voice assistants, also require *speech recognition* capability, which is the ability to convert human speech to text that a computer can then analyze.

Data Mining, Text Mining The computerized process of extracting insights from vast collections of numerical or textual records.

of their reputation for expertise, their celebrity, or the number of followers they have. When discussing products on social media, influencers must disclose any *material relationship* they have with the company involved, whether it's being an employee of the firm, having a friend or family connection with the company, or receiving money or anything else of value from the company.²⁹ For example, if you review a product on TikTok or YouTube and the company gave you the product or offered any other consideration, you must disclose this to your viewers. Similarly, if a company pays you to mention its products on your Instagram account or any other social media outlet, you must label these posts as ads. If you are or aspire to be a social media influencer, be sure to review your legal responsibilities at [ftc.gov/influencers](https://www.ftc.gov/influencers). The European Union and other government regulators around the world also have transparency rules that apply to marketing activities in their respective countries.

Distorting Information

Intentionally distorting information is also a form of unethical communication. This distortion can involve words, numbers, or images. For example, selectively misquoting someone in order to create a different impression than the source intended is unethical. Statistical and other numerical data can also be presented in ways that distort their implications. Two examples are using averages to conceal extreme individual values or manipulating trend calculations to suggest future values that the underlying data might not support. For example, you might boast that sales increased 40 percent in April as evidence of a big upward trend, when in fact March sales had been a disaster and all that 40 percent increase did was bring sales back to their earlier level. Images can be manipulated in unethical ways, such as altering photos or changing the scale of graphs and charts to exaggerate or conceal differences.

Distortion and outright fabrication of information are becoming greater concerns as the tools for manipulating images, sound, and video become more sophisticated. The ability to modify photographs has been around for decades, starting with physical tools such as airbrushing and continuing into the digital realm with software such as Photoshop and apps with filters that instantly apply various visual effects. Convincingly modifying audio and video without detection has always been more challenging, although it has always been possible to make crude changes such as snipping out sections of tape or splicing together unrelated bits of recording.

With the advent of AI, however, this situation is changing dramatically. AI-based facial image generators can synthesize photos that are indistinguishable from real people, and it's even possible to custom-order images based on age, skin tone, gender, and other variables.³⁰ And in the audio and video realm, AI is making it possible to modify existing recordings in undetectable ways and to synthesize entirely fake recordings that are becoming indistinguishable from the real thing. (See "Practicing Ethical Communication: Are You for Real?" for more on the growing problem of *deepfake* video.) As these technologies continue to evolve, business communicators must be more vigilant than ever as information users and more careful than ever as information creators.

Plagiarizing

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's words or other creative product as your own. Note that plagiarism can also be illegal if it violates a **copyright**, which is a form of legal protection for the originators of creative content. Copyright law covers a wide range of creative expression, including writing, visual design, computer programming, and sound and video recording.³¹

Note that plagiarism standards and copyright law don't mean you can never use someone else's work. However, you must use it ethically and legally, including properly documenting your sources, clearly labeling anyone else's words and images as theirs, and using only minor portions, such as brief quotations. (Depending on the nature of the project and the material, you might need to get written permission to use material.) You can be sued for copyright infringement if you copy a significant part of a work, even if you don't copy it word for word or profit from doing so.³²

The concept of *fair use* provides some flexibility in using others' creative work without violating copyright, particularly for noncommercial use, but there are no precise guidelines on how much you can use. And as attorney Kerry O'Shea Gorgone explains, fair use can

plagiarism Presenting someone else's words or other creative product as your own

copyright A form of legal protection for the expression of creative ideas

PRACTICING ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

Are You for Real?

Think about all the video content you've watched over the past few months, from educational materials and product reviews to celebrity gossip and news clips. In various ways, these videos have shaped what you believe and feel about the world around you, and in most cases you probably didn't see any reason to doubt what you've seen because, hey—it's all right there in the video.

Now imagine if all those videos were fake. What if the executive coach in that instructional video was really an AI-generated avatar, misrepresenting someone else's work? If the product review in which a well-regarded technical expert convinced you not to buy a particular product was a fake produced by a competitor and that expert had no idea she even "appeared" in the video? If your favorite celebrity wasn't actually in that salacious video that ruined a sterling reputation? If that press conference in which the president said something outlandish never happened?

Welcome to the disturbing world of deepfake video—material that has been generated or modified by AI in such a convincing way that it can fool most casual viewers, many experts, and even other AI algorithms designed specifically to spot deepfakes. In a world where communication is more visual than ever before, the prospect of video becoming literally unbelievable has enormous implications in just about every aspect of modern life.

Deepfakes are becoming so convincing that some experts believe that trying to detect them might no longer be the most productive defense. In fact, some of the very AI tools used to detect fakes can inadvertently teach deepfake AIs how to get

even more deceptive. A better alternative, these experts argue, is to digitally mark video content in such a way that viewers can confirm who created it and be alerted if anyone modified it after it was created. One promising effort in this direction is Project Origin, formed by Microsoft and three leading news organizations, which aims to establish industrywide standards (known as the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity) for authenticating video.

The vision for this system is that when content producers create a video file, they can register its digital "fingerprint" in a secure database. Authentication could even be built right into digital cameras so that as soon as a video is recorded, it is securely identified as the original content. As a video file then moves around the internet, websites, social media platforms, and mobile apps can compare the current state of the video with its authenticated original and alert viewers if the video has been altered. And if viewers see a video that isn't identified as authentic, they will know not to believe what they see. If this system gets established, it could go a long way toward restoring trust in one of society's most important communication media.³³

CRITICAL THINKING

1. Have you encountered any video clips that you suspected might have been manipulated in a way meant to deceive viewers? What clues tipped you off?
2. Would a mark of authenticity such as that proposed by Project Origin convince you that a video you're watching is the unaltered original? Why or why not?

only be invoked as a legal defense *after* a copyright owner sues you for infringement. You can't simply take someone else's content and preemptively label it as "fair use."³⁴ (*Content curation* and other forms of social media sharing present some particularly sticky issues, as Chapter 8 explains.)

Failing to Consider Negative Consequences

Even if you have provided all the information a situation requires and have done so without distorting it or plagiarizing anyone else's work, it is still possible to make an ethical misstep if you don't consider the consequences of your communication efforts. This consideration can range from small scenarios that involve only a few people to the vast reaches of social media.

For example, imagine you are upset with something fairly trivial at work, such as the speed of the office internet connection or the quality of the coffee in the cafeteria. You're having a rough day, and this minor annoyance gets to you. You pop off a quick complaint in your team's workgroup messaging system—nothing harsh or inflammatory, just enough to register your dissatisfaction. What if others pick up on the complaint and spread it through the company, it gets amplified to the point that upper management thinks they have a major employee revolt on their hands, and before you know it, somebody in the responsible department gets fired? All you wanted to do was let off a little steam, but an ill-considered message caused significant damage to someone else's life.

On a larger scale, social media can quickly spread and amplify even well-intentioned messages in unhelpful and potentially dangerous ways. Social networks are rife with questionable tips on health and personal finances, for example, and these messages can get forwarded to audiences the originators may have never envisioned or interpreted in ways they never intended. Nutrition advice that might be fine for a professional athlete or bodybuilder

working under medical supervision could be disastrous for a still-developing teenager who tries it with no medical advice, for instance.

Even the overall communication strategies a company follows have ethical implications. Many parents and psychologists have strong concerns about the effect social media usage can have on the mental health of teenagers and young adults. In an unusual move in an era when many consumer-goods companies consider social media an essential communication channel, the cosmetics retailer Lush decided in late 2021 to unplug from four social platforms—Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok—that it said weren't doing enough to ensure user safety. The company said that reaching out to customers on those platforms felt like asking them to “meet us down a dark and dangerous alleyway” and it was going to stay off until the platforms could ensure a safer user experience.³⁵

Violating Privacy

Privacy is a major ethical and legal issue in contemporary business, including many facets of business communication. Companies collect a staggering amount of data about customers, potential customers, and employees. Just about everything we do with digital technology leaves data “footprints” or “digital dust,” and businesses spend billions of dollars a year gathering, buying, analyzing, and using all these clues. *Data brokers* that aggregate data about consumers and sell these profiles to other companies can have hundreds of data points about every individual in their records.³⁶ The *Internet of Behaviors (IoB)* concept aims to capture, profile, and then influence the behavior of consumers via all the internet-connected devices in their lives, from phones to wearable devices to automobiles. (The billions of devices connected to the internet are referred to as the *Internet of Things*, or IoT.) Much of this effort focuses on being able to predict consumer behavior in order to deliver more-compelling marketing messages in the right place at the right time, such as getting personalized messages in a grocery store based on things you've already put in your cart. As the consulting firm Gartner notes, “there will be extensive ethical and societal debates” about IoB techniques.³⁷

Data collection occurs inside the organization as well, with employers monitoring various aspects of employee behavior, performance, and communication practices. Many companies now monitor employees' digital communications, social media usage, and even keyboard activity.³⁸ Some of these efforts are ethically justifiable and sometimes even legally required, but some clearly cross the line. The clothing retailer H&M found itself in hot water recently after one of its facilities in Germany had been recording “welcome back to work” conversations managers had with employees who were returning from vacation or sick leave. These conversations sometimes revealed personal information about religious practices, family issues, and health problems, and several dozen managers throughout the organization were able to access some of the recorded details. German authorities fined the company the equivalent of more than \$40 million for violating employee privacy laws.³⁹

Few people would argue that companies have a responsibility to acquire, use, and store sensitive data in ethical ways. While this sounds simple in concept, though, it can be immensely complicated in legal, ethical, and practical terms. You can hear a wide spectrum of opinions regarding digital privacy, from “privacy no longer exists; get over it” at one extreme to people who take extraordinary steps to stay as “digitally invisible” as possible. Many of the convenient and valuable services of modern life rely on data, and to use these services consumers must agree to let companies capture and use various types of personal information. (This is what you're doing every time you accept cookies on a website or agree to an app's terms of service.) In addition, there are often competing ethical claims, as the next section explores. Employees expect a certain level of privacy at work, but employers have an ethical and often legal obligation to make sure the company's resources (such as email systems) aren't used in inappropriate or illegal ways. With more employees working from home in the aftermath of the pandemic, the dilemma about monitoring their behavior is even more acute.

Note that communication privacy isn't just a matter of computer networks and data files. Even something as common as office gossip can be a violation of privacy if two people are sharing private information about a third party. All employees can

contribute to an ethical workplace by being mindful of what they share in day-to-day communication.

Two opposing trends are in motion in business today when it comes to privacy. On the one hand, companies are developing ever more powerful systems for gathering and processing consumer and employee data. Many of these systems promise to deliver beneficial advances in smart shopping, safety, health management, and other areas, benefits that many people will consider worth the loss of privacy. On the other hand, many citizens, employees, and some elected officials are pressing for less intrusion and greater protections. Some companies are responding, such as Google phasing out the *behavioral tracking* ability it had given advertisers to study people's interests by tracking them across the web as they moved from website to website.⁴⁰

A number of companies now emphasize *first-party data*, which is information consumers have given them explicit permission to collect, in contrast to data that third parties assemble about consumers by monitoring their behavior.⁴¹ Ensuring greater protection for consumer privacy in a data-driven world could become an important branding imperative for many companies.⁴² Principled leaders make it a priority to protect customer privacy. Affectiva's Rana el Kaliouby, for instance, is adamant that the company's image recognition technology will not be deployed in ways that violate privacy.⁴³

DISTINGUISHING ETHICAL DILEMMAS FROM ETHICAL LAPSES

Privacy debates highlight the fact that some ethical questions are easy to recognize and resolve, but others are not. Deciding what is ethical or which of two competing alternatives is the most ethical choice can be a considerable challenge in complex business situations. An **ethical dilemma** involves choosing among alternatives that aren't clear-cut. Perhaps two conflicting alternatives are both ethical and valid, or perhaps the alternatives lie somewhere in the gray area between clearly right and clearly wrong. Every company has responsibilities to multiple groups of people inside and outside the firm, and those groups often have competing interests. For instance, employees naturally want higher wages and more benefits, but investors who have risked their money in the company want management to keep costs low so that profits are strong enough to drive up the stock price. Both sides have a valid ethical position.

In contrast, an **ethical lapse** is a clearly unethical choice. With both internal and external communication efforts, the pressure to produce results or justify decisions can make unethical communication a tempting choice. Telling a potential customer you can complete a project by a certain date when you know you can't is simply dishonest. There is no ethical dilemma here.

Compare the messages in Figures 1.9 and 1.10 for examples of how business messages can be unethically manipulated.

ethical dilemma A situation that involves making a choice when all competing alternatives are ethically valid or the alternatives aren't completely wrong or completely right

ethical lapse A clearly unethical choice

ENSURING ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

Employers have a responsibility to establish clear guidelines for ethical behavior, including ethical business communication. Many companies establish an explicit ethics policy by using a written **code of ethics** to help employees determine what is acceptable. These typically include a range of general principles and specific rules that apply to a company's particular line of business. For example, Soul Machines is an AI company that makes hyper-realistic agents it refers to as "digital people" that perform a wide variety of interactive communication functions in customer service, health care, entertainment, and education. Its comprehensive code of ethics includes rules that govern the behavior of its AI agents, such as the stipulation that an agent must never try to pass itself off as a real human being.⁴⁴

A code is often part of a larger program of compliance protocols, employee training, and communication channels. Many companies establish an *ethics hotline*, a phone number or an online portal that lets employees report instances of questionable ethics, and publicly traded U.S. companies (those that sell shares in the stock market) are required to have them. Hotlines can encourage reports from employees who might be reluctant to talk to their

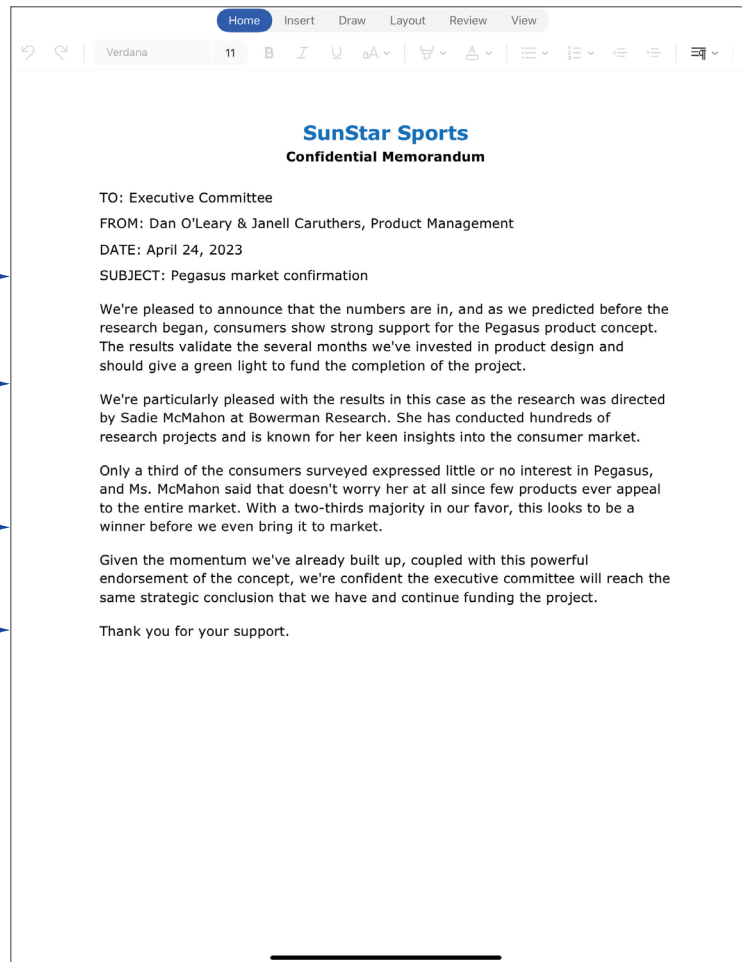
code of ethics A written set of ethical guidelines that companies expect their employees to follow

(a) The subject line is misleading. As you'll see, the research did *not* confirm the market potential for the new Pegasus product.

(c) The writers present McMahon's experience in a way that suggests it supports their claim, which isn't true. Plus, they don't provide any of McMahon's original text, so readers can't verify for themselves.

(e) This paragraph also mixes McMahon's opinions and conclusions with O'Leary and Caruthers's own opinions.

(g) The closing line assumes the writers have the committee's support, which may not be true.



(b) The opening paragraph is dishonest, as you'll see in Figure 1.10. The phrase "as we predicted" also suggests that O'Leary and Caruthers had their minds made up before the research even started. Plus, the writers don't provide any background on the research or offer ways for readers to see the results for themselves.

(d) The statement that "a two-thirds majority" expressed interest in the product concept is not true, as you can see in Figure 1.10.

(f) The writers bias the conversation again by implying that the executive committee would be making a mistake if it disagreed with them.

Figure 1.9 Unethical Communication

The writers of this memo clearly want the company to continue funding their pet project, even though the marketing research doesn't support such a decision. By comparing this memo with the version shown in Figure 1.10 (be sure to read the lettered annotations), you can see how the writers twisted the truth and omitted evidence in order to put a positive "spin" on the research.

supervisors about ethical concerns, but they are not foolproof or universally effective at stamping out ethical abuse. The best solution starts with an ethical culture that is modeled by top management and enforced throughout the organization.⁴⁵ Managers must demonstrate ethical behavior themselves and support employees who face ethical dilemmas. Codes and training don't mean much if employees feel pressured to make unethical choices or see their superiors acting unethically.

Whether or not a company has formal guidelines in place, every employee has a responsibility to communicate in an ethical manner. To make sure you are communicating ethically, keep these five questions in mind:

- Is my intention honorable, and does it demonstrate respect for my audience?
- Am I giving my readers or listeners all the information they need in order to take an informed stance or make an informed decision?
- Have I considered the effect my message will have on the audience and anyone else who might be affected by it?
- Am I respecting the legal and moral rights of anyone whose information or ideas I am using?
- Could a different approach produce a more positive outcome for everyone involved?

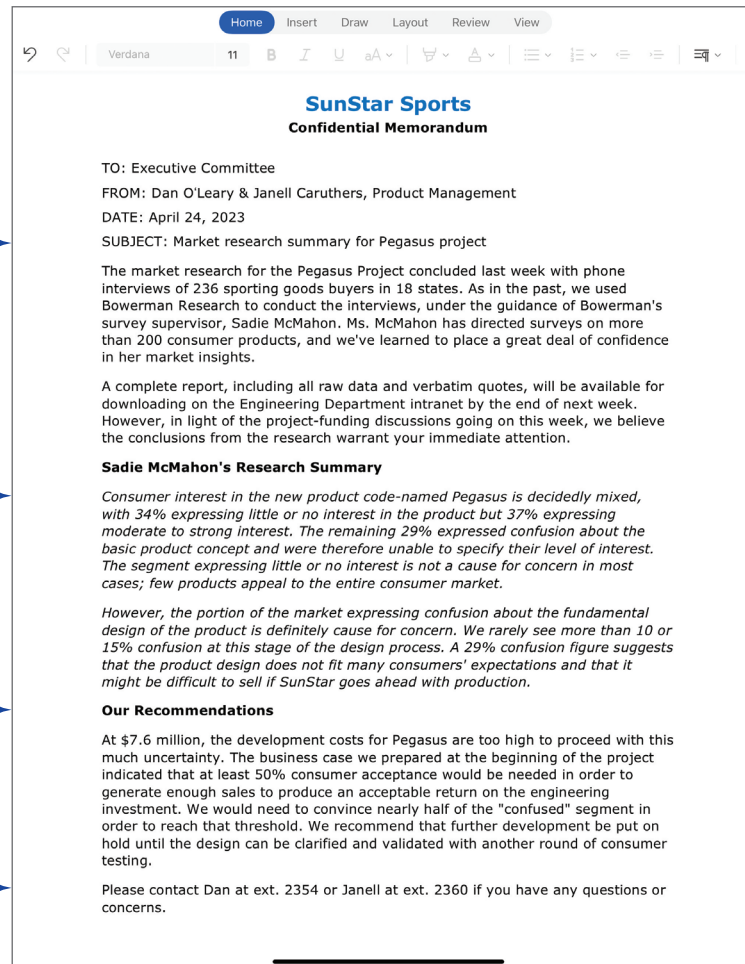
If you still can't decide whether a choice is ethical, picture yourself explaining your decision to someone whose opinion you value. Could you comfortably live with your choice?

(a) This neutral subject line doesn't try to sell the conclusion before readers have the opportunity to review the evidence for themselves.

(c) By providing the complete text of the researcher's summary, the memo allows readers to reach their own conclusions about what she wrote.

(e) The writers are careful to separate the researcher's observations and opinions from their own, even to the point of grouping them under separate subheadings.

(g) The close invites further discussion of the situation, without assuming agreement of the writers' conclusions.



(b) Rather than hard-selling a conclusion that isn't even true, this opening offers a quick overview of the research and emphasizes the experience of the researcher. In the second paragraph, the writers continue by offering full disclosure of all background information related to the research project.

(d) The numbers here show how the original memo skewed the results. Just because one-third had no interest in the product does not mean two-thirds did. Moreover, the second paragraph from the researcher clearly indicates that she is concerned about the product's viability in the marketplace—a critical point completely missing in the original memo.

(f) The recommendation states clearly and objectively that the project probably will not live up to original hopes.

Figure 1.10 Ethical Communication

This version of the memo from Figure 1.9 presents the evidence in a more honest and ethical manner.

ENSURING LEGAL COMMUNICATION

In addition to ethical guidelines, business communication is also bound by a wide variety of laws and regulations, including the following areas:

- **Promotional communication.** Anyone who creates or shares marketing messages needs to be aware of the many laws that govern truth and accuracy in advertising. These laws address such issues as false and deceptive advertising, claims expressed on product packaging, the use of celebrity testimonials, and bait-and-switch tactics in which a store advertises a lower-priced product to lure consumers into a store but then tries to sell them a more expensive item.⁴⁶ Chapter 11 explores this area in more detail.
- **Contracts.** A **contract** is a legally binding promise between two parties in which one party makes a specified offer and the other party accepts.⁴⁷ Contracts cover a wide range of business scenarios, including employment, purchasing and leasing, project services, and nondisclosure agreements. Not all contracts are labeled with the term *contract*, and in some scenarios you might be making a legal commitment without being aware of it. Always ask for legal advice if you're not sure.
- **Employee communication.** A variety of local, state, and federal laws govern communication between employers and both potential and current employees. For example, employers are required to inform employees about workplace hazards such as toxic chemicals.⁴⁸
- **Intellectual property.** In an age when instant global connectivity makes copying and retransmitting electronic files effortless, the protection of digital and creative assets

contract A legally binding promise between two parties, in which one party makes a specified offer and the other party accepts