

Business Communication for Success

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PART I

CHAPTER I: EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing.

–Rollo May

I know that you believe that you understood what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.

–Robert J. McCloskey, former State Department spokesman

Introductory Exercises

1. Write five words that express what you want to do and where you want to be a year from now. Take those five words and write a paragraph that clearly articulates your responses to both “what” and “where.”
2. Think of five words that express what you want to do and where you want to be five years from now. Share your five words with your classmates and listen to their responses. What patterns do you observe in the responses? Write a paragraph that addresses at least one observation.

Communication is an activity, skill, and art that incorporates lessons learned across a wide spectrum of human knowledge. Perhaps the most time-honored form of communication is storytelling. We’ve told each other stories for ages to help make sense of our world, anticipate the future, and certainly to entertain ourselves. The art of storytelling draws on your understanding of yourself, your message, and how you communicate it to an audience that is simultaneously communicating back to you. Your anticipation, reaction, and adaptation to the process will determine how successfully you are able to communicate. You were not born knowing how to write or even how to talk—but in the process of growing up, you have undoubtedly learned how to tell, and how not tell, a story out loud and in writing.

You didn’t learn to text in a day and didn’t learn all the codes—from LOL (laugh out loud) to BRB (be right back)—right away. In the same way, learning to communicate well requires you to read and study how others have expressed themselves, then adapt what you have learned to your present task—whether it is texting a brief message to a friend, presenting your qualifications in a job interview, or writing a business report. You come to this text with skills and an understanding that will provide a valuable foundation as we explore the communication process.

Effective communication takes preparation, practice, and persistence. There are many ways to learn communication skills; the school of experience, or “hard knocks,” is one of them. But in the business environment, a “knock” (or lesson learned) may come at the expense of your credibility through a blown presentation to a client. The classroom environment, with a compilation of information and resources such as a text, can offer you a trial run where you get to try out new ideas and skills before you have to use them to communicate effectively to make a sale or form a new partnership. Listening to yourself, or perhaps the

comments of others, may help you reflect on new ways to present, or perceive, thoughts, ideas and concepts. The net result is your growth; ultimately your ability to communicate in business will improve, opening more doors than you might anticipate.

As you learn the material in this text, each part will contribute to the whole. The degree to which you attend to each part will ultimately help give you the skills, confidence, and preparation to use communication in furthering your career.

PART II

CHAPTER 2: DELIVERING YOUR MESSAGE

Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee and just as hard to sleep after.

–Anne Morrow Lindbergh

The meanings of words are not in the words; they are in us.

–S. I. Hayakawa

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Can you match the words to their meaning?

___ 1. phat	A. Weird, strange, unfair, or not acceptable
___ 2. dis	B. Something stupid or thoughtless, deserving correction
___ 3. wack	C. Excellent, together, cool
___ 4. smack	D. Old car, generally in poor but serviceable condition
___ 5. down	E. Insult, put down, to dishonor, to display disrespect
___ 6. hooptie	F. Get out or leave quickly
___ 7. my bad	G. Cool, very interesting, fantastic or amazing
___ 8. player	H. To be in agreement
___ 9. tight	I. Personal mistake
___ 10. jet	J. Person dating with multiple partners, often unaware of each other

2. Do people use the same language in all settings and contexts? Your first answer might be “sure,” but try this test. For a couple of hours, or even a day, pay attention to how you speak, and how others speak: the words you say, how you say them, the pacing and timing used in each context. For example, at home in the morning, in the coffee shop before work or class, during a break at work with peers or a break between classes with classmates all count as contexts. Observe how and what language is used in each context and to what degree they are the same or different.

Answers

1. 1-C, 2-E, 3-A, 4-B, 5-H, 6-D, 7-I, 8-J, 9-G, 10-F

Successful business communication is often associated with writing and speaking well, being articulate or proficient with words. Yet, in the quote above, the famous linguist S. I. Hayakawa wisely observes that meaning lies within us, not in the words we use. Indeed, communication in this text is defined as the process of

understanding and sharing meaning (Pearson & Nelson, 2000). When you communicate you are sharing meaning with one or more other people—this may include members of your family, your community, your work community, your school, or any group that considers itself a group.

How do you communicate? How do you think? We use language as a system to create and exchange meaning with one another, and the types of words we use influence both our perceptions and others interpretation of our meanings. What kinds of words would you use to describe your thoughts and feelings, your preferences in music, cars, food, or other things that matter to you?

Imagine that you are using written or spoken language to create a bridge over which you hope to transport meaning, much like a gift or package, to your receiver. You hope that your meaning arrives relatively intact, so that your receiver receives something like what you sent. Will the package look the same to them on the receiving end? Will they interpret the package, its wrapping and colors, the way you intended? That depends.

What is certain is that they will interpret it based on their framework of experience. The package represents your words arranged in a pattern that both the source (you) and the receiver (your audience) can interpret. The words as a package try to contain the meaning and deliver it intact, but they themselves are not the meaning. That lies within us.

So is the package empty? Are the words we use empty? Without us to give them life and meaning, the answer is yes. Knowing what words will correspond to meanings that your audience holds within themselves will help you communicate more effectively. Knowing what meanings lie within you is your door to understanding yourself.

This chapter discusses the importance of delivering your message in words. It examines how the characteristics of language interact in ways that can both improve and diminish effective business communication. We will examine how language plays a significant role in how you perceive and interact with the world, and how culture, language, education, gender, race, and ethnicity all influence this dynamic process. We will look at ways to avoid miscommunication and focus on constructive ways to get your message delivered to your receiver with the meaning you intended.

References

Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An introduction to human communication: Understanding and sharing*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

PART III

CHAPTER 3: UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE

Your mind is like a parachute. It works best when it's open.

–Anonymous

To see an object in the world we must see it as something.

–Ludwig Wittgenstein

You will either step forward into growth or you will step back into safety.

–Abraham Maslow

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. In order to communicate with others, you need to know yourself. Please complete a personal inventory, a simple list of what comes to mind in these five areas:

- **Your knowledge:** What is your favorite subject?
- **Your skills:** What can you do?
- **Your experience:** What has been your experience writing to date?
- **Your interests:** What do you enjoy?
- **Your relationships:** Who is important to you?

2. To be a successful communicator, it is helpful to be conscious of how you view yourself and others. Please consider what groups you belong to, particularly in terms of race, ethnicity, or culture. Imagine that you had to communicate your perception of just one of these groups. Please choose five terms from the list below, and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree that the term describes the group accurately.

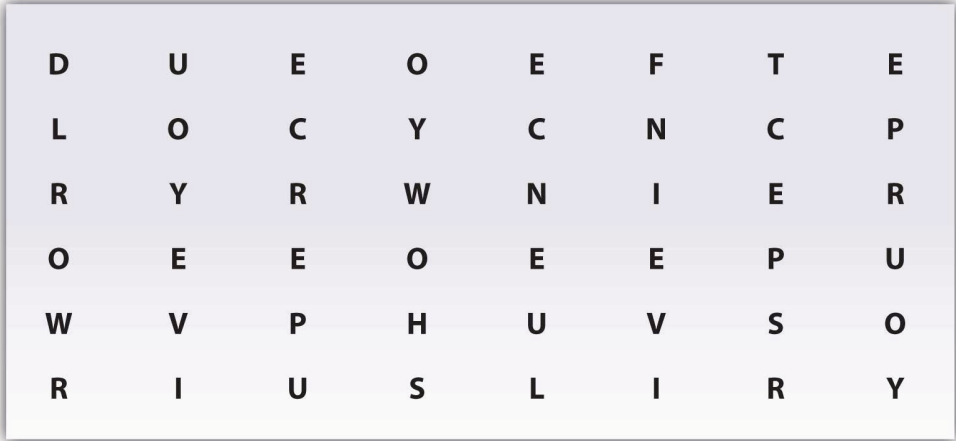
Term	Describes the Group Accurately				
	1-Strongly disagree	2-Somewhat disagree	3-Neither agree nor disagree	4-Somewhat agree	5-Strongly agree
Independent					
Dependent					
Hardworking					
Lazy					
Progressive					
Traditional					
Sophisticated					
Simple					
Creative					
Practical					

Introductory Exercises (cont.)

3. Now consider a group that you have little or no contact with. Please choose five terms (the same ones or different ones) and again indicate how accurately they describe the group. How do your results compare with those in Exercise 2?¹

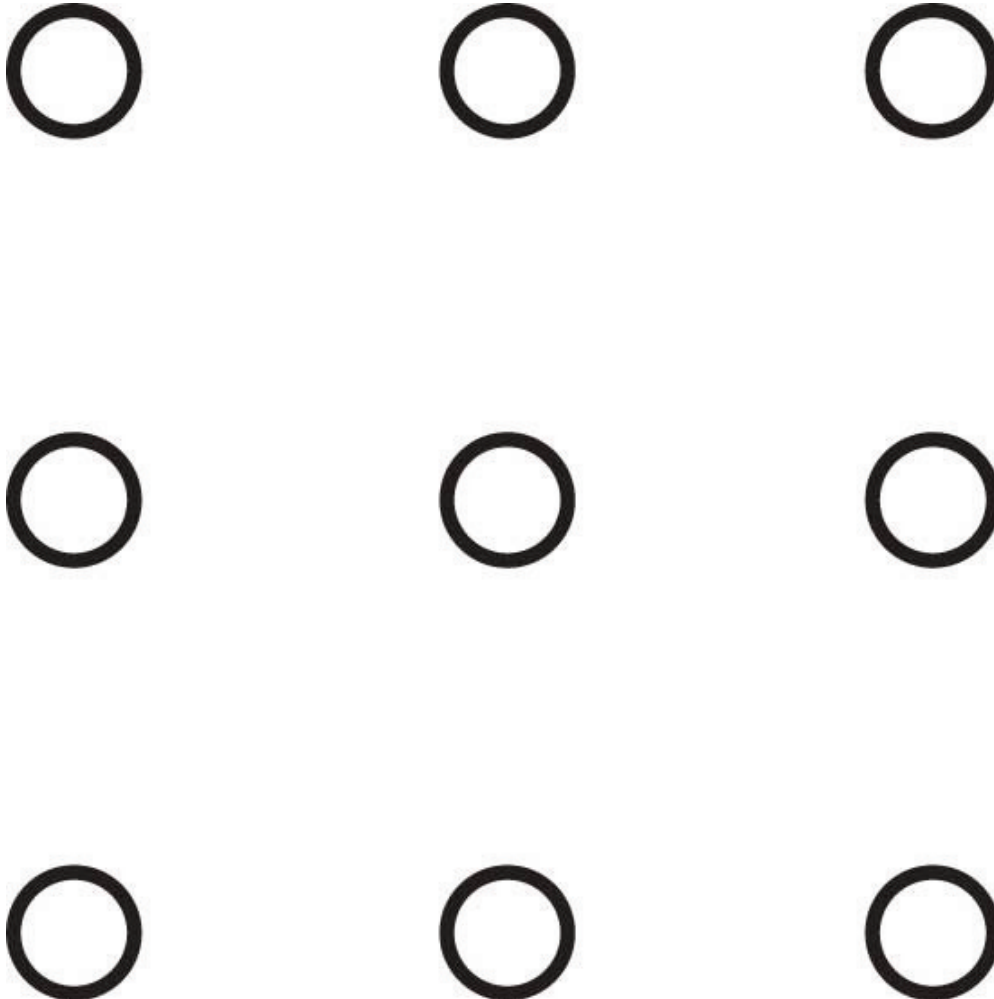
4. Please find the hidden message²:

Figure 3.1



5. Connect the dots by drawing four straight lines, making sure not to lift your pen from the paper or retrace lines³.

Figure 3.2 Nine-Dot Problem

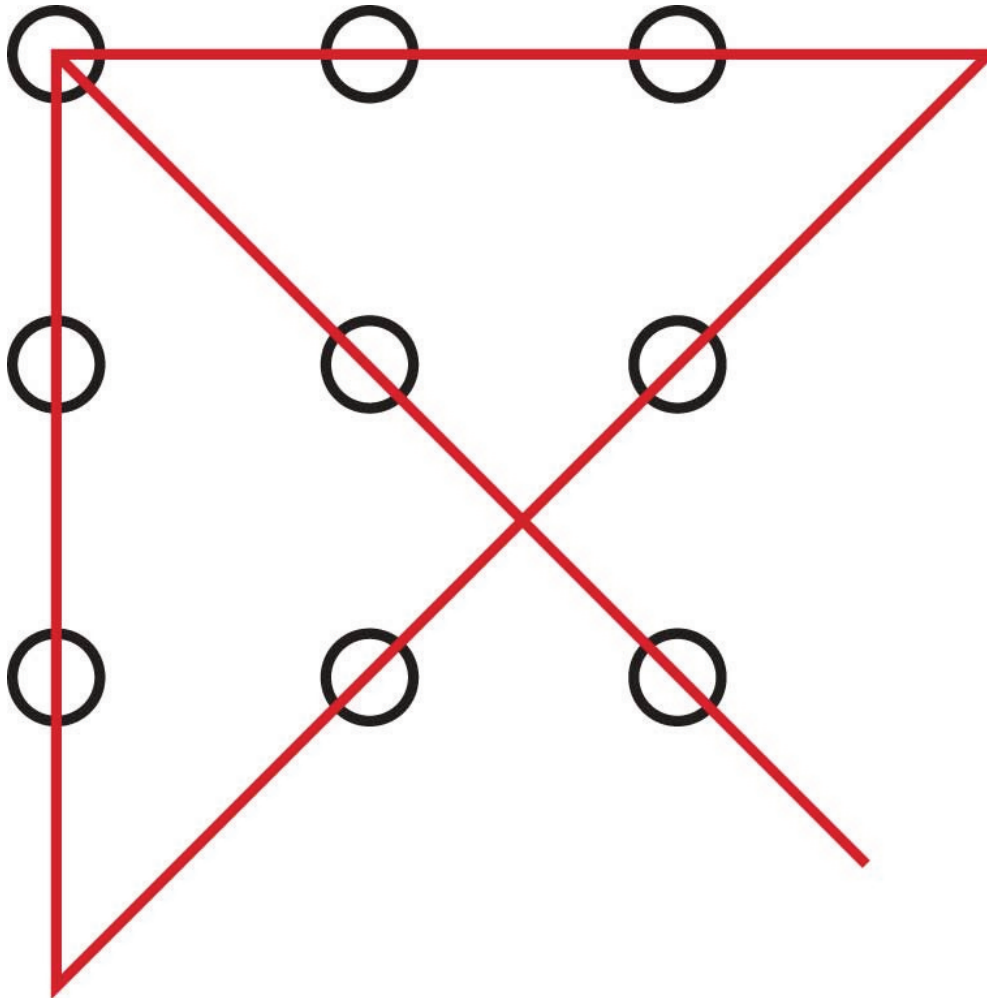


Communicating involves the translation of your thoughts and ideas to words. Speaking or writing involves sharing your perspective with others. If you talk to yourself, the action is a reflection of the communication process, but you play the role of audience. In your head, you may make sense of your words and their meaning, but when I hear what you said, what you meant may escape me. I might not “get it” because I don’t know you, your references, your perspectives, your word choices, or your underlying meaning and motivation for speaking in the first place. In this chapter we’ll discuss perspectives, and how people perceive information, as we learn how communication is an imperfect bridge to understanding. It requires our constant attention, maintenance, and effort.

Knowing your audience involves understanding others, and their perspectives, to see if they understand your words, examples, or the frames of reference you use to communicate your experiences, points, and conclusions. Ask yourself when you last had a miscommunication with someone. No doubt it was fairly recently, as it is for most people.

It's not people's fault that language, both verbal and nonverbal, is an imperfect system. We can, however, take responsibility for the utility and limitations of language to try to gain a better understanding of how we can communicate more effectively. As a communicator, consider both the role of the speaker and the audience and not only what and how you want to communicate but also what and how your audience needs you to communicate with them in order to present an effective message.

Figure 3.3 Solution to Introductory Exercise 5 (the "Nine-Dot Problem")



Take, for example, the word “love.” Yes, we recognize those four little letters all in a row, but what does it really mean? You can use it to describe the feelings and emotions associated with your mother, a partner, or perhaps your dog. Or you might say you love chocolate cake. Does your use of the word in any given context allow the audience to get any closer to what you mean by this word, “love”? The key here is context, which provides clues to how you mean the word and what its use means to you. The context allows you to close the gap between your meaning of “love” and what the receiver, or audience, has in their range of understanding of the same word. Your experiences are certainly different, but through clues, contexts, and attempts to understand each other’s perspectives, we can often communicate more effectively.

This gives rise to an issue: how do I deal with twenty or twenty-five “perspectives” in a classroom or a reading audience of infinite size and try to narrow the gap with each audience member? Before we tackle this question, let’s first follow the advice given by the character Polonius in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: “To thine own self be true.” This relates to the notion that you need to know yourself, or your perspective, before you can explore ways

to know others and communicate more effectively. You will examine how you perceive stimuli, choosing some information over others, organizing the information according to your frame of reference, and interpreting it, deciding what it means to you and whether you should remember it or just ignore it and move on. We can recognize that not everyone tunes in to the same music, trends in clothing, or even classes, so experiences or stimuli can have different meanings. Still, we can find common ground and communicate effectively.

¹Adapted from Gudykunst, W. (1994). Ethnocentrism scale and instructions. In *Bridging differences: Effective intergroup communication* (2nd ed., pp. 98–99). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

²Adapted from McLean, S. (2003). *The basics of speech communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

³Adapted from McLean, S. (2003). *The basics of speech communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

PART IV

CHAPTER 4: EFFECTIVE BUSINESS WRITING

However great...natural talent may be, the art of writing cannot be learned all at once.

–Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Read, read, read...Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master.

–William Faulkner

You only learn to be a better writer by actually writing.

–Doris Lessing

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Take a moment to write three words that describe your success in writing.
2. Make a list of words that you associate with writing. Compare your list with those of your classmates.
3. Briefly describe your experience writing and include one link to something you like to read in your post.

Something we often hear in business is, “Get it in writing.” This advice is meant to prevent misunderstandings based on what one person thought the other person said. But does written communication—getting it in writing—always prevent misunderstandings?

According to a *Washington Post* news story, a written agreement would have been helpful to an airline customer named Mike. A victim of an airport mishap, Mike was given vouchers for \$7,500 worth of free travel. However, in accordance with the airline’s standard policy, the vouchers were due to expire in twelve months. When Mike saw that he and his wife would not be able to do enough flying to use the entire amount before the expiration date, he called the airline and asked for an extension. He was told the airline would extend the deadline, but later discovered they were willing to do so at only 50 percent of the vouchers’ value. An airline spokesman told the newspaper, “If [Mike] can produce a letter stating that we would give the full value of the vouchers, he should produce it” (Oldenburg, 2005).

Yet, as we will see in this chapter, putting something in writing is not always a foolproof way to ensure accuracy and understanding. A written communication is only as accurate as the writer’s knowledge of the subject and audience, and understanding depends on how well the writer captures the reader’s attention.

This chapter addresses the written word in a business context. We will also briefly consider the symbols, design, font, timing, and related nonverbal expressions you make when composing a page or document. Our discussions will focus on effective communication of your thoughts and ideas through writing that is clear, concise, and efficient.

References

Oldenburg, D. (2005, April 12). Old adage holds: Get it in writing. *Washington Post*, p. C10. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A45309-2005Apr11.html>.

PART V

CHAPTER 5: WRITING PREPARATION

*Before you write, think.
-William Arthur Ward*

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Identify a career you are interested in pursuing and do an online search for information about it, taking note of the number of results returned and a couple of the top ten sources. Compare your results with those of your classmates.
2. Visit your college or university library. Familiarize yourself with the resources available to business writers and choose one resource that you find especially valuable. Write a short summary of the resource to share with your classmates, explaining why you chose this resource.
3. In a business setting, describe some circumstances where it would be appropriate to send a message by instant messaging, or by e-mail, or in a printed memo. Ask some colleagues or coworker what they consider the best option and why, and share the results with the class.

No matter who you are, you were not born speaking English (or any other language), and were certainly not born writing. You learned to speak and to write and, like all humans, your skill in speaking and writing can continue to improve and adapt across your lifetime. The awareness of this simple fact should encourage you. If your writing has been well received in the past, congratulations. It may be that your skill in producing college-level essays has served you well. Still, the need for learning to produce clear, concise business writing may be a new skill for you. Even seasoned professional business communicators find it a challenge to present complex and dynamic relationships in a way that the audience can grasp at a glance, on a first read, or with minimal effort. If your writing has not been as well received in the past as you would like, this chapter will help you see the process from a perspective where attention to specific steps can lead to overall success.

In addition to your previous experiences, you will necessarily draw on the writing of others as you prepare for your writing effort. If you have ever fallen asleep on your textbook, you know that trying to absorb many pages of reading in a single session is not the best strategy for studying. In the same way, as you prepare to write a business document, you know that using the first search result listed on Google or Yahoo! is not the best strategy for success. You may be tempted to gather only the information that is most readily available, or that which confirms your viewpoint, but you will sell yourself short and may produce an inferior piece of writing.

Instead, you need to determine the purpose of your writing project; search for information, facts, and statistics to support your purpose; and remain aware of information that contradicts the message you are aiming to convey. Think of it as an exercise program. If you only do the easy exercises, and nothing else, you may develop a single muscle group, but will never gain real strength. What kinds of skills, or strengths, will you need in order to write well enough to succeed in your career? Solid research skills combined with effective preparation for

writing involve a range of skill sets that require time and practice. The degree to which you make the extra effort will pay dividends throughout your career.

PART VI

CHAPTER 6: WRITING

Although I usually think I know what I'm going to be writing about, what I'm going to say, most of the time it doesn't happen that way at all. At some point I get misled down a garden path, I get surprised by an idea that I hadn't anticipated getting, which is a little bit like being in a laboratory.
-Lewis Thomas

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Match each statement in the left column with the most appropriate mode of communication in the right column, and note why.

___ 1. Need the sales figures for the last month available in three days	A. Text message or instant message (IM)
___ 2. Inform department employees of face-to-face (F2F) meeting next month	B. E-mail
___ 3. International client requests price quote	C. Fax
___ 4. Assigned to investigate partnership with supplier to codevelop a new product	D. Report
___ 5. Need to inform employee of a discrepancy in their expense report	E. Proposal
___ 6. Need to facilitate meeting with two department managers from two distinct time zones.	F. Face-to-face (F2F) meeting, interpersonal interaction
___ 7. Need to follow up with customer post sale	G. F2F meeting, group or team
___ 8. Need to contact new prospective customer	H. Meeting (mediated), teleconference or videoconference

There are no right or wrong answers to this matching exercise, but there are strengths and weaknesses associated with each mode. Does the information need to be received as soon as possible? Will the document require time and preparation? Will the result be comprehensive and require visual representation of data, trends, and their relationships(s)? Associate each statement with what you consider the most appropriate model of communication and note why. Discuss your responses with your classmates.

Introductory Exercises (cont.)

2. These sentences focus on some of the most common errors in English. Can you fill in the blanks correctly?

1. <i>accept</i> or <i>except</i>	The office will _____ applications until 5 p.m. on the 31st.	accept	Attendance is required for all employees _____ supervisors.	except
2. <i>affect</i> or <i>effect</i>	To _____ the growth of plants, we can regulate the water supply.	affect	A lack of water has a predictable _____ on most plants.	effect
3. <i>e.g.</i> or <i>i.e.</i>	Please order 2,000 imprinted giveaways (_____, pens or coffee mugs)	e.g.	Charge them to my account (_____, account #98765).	i.e.
4. <i>its</i> or <i>it's</i>	The department surpassed _____ previous sales record this quarter.	its	_____ my opinion that we reached peak oil in 2008.	It's
5. <i>lay</i> or <i>lie</i>	Please _____ the report on the desk.	lay	The doctor asked him to _____ down on the examination table.	lie
6. <i>pressure</i> or <i>pressurize</i>	We need to _____ the liquid nitrogen tanks.	pressurize	It might be possible to _____ him to resign.	pressure
7. <i>principle</i> or <i>principal</i>	It's the basic _____ of farming: no water, no food.	principle	The _____ reason for the trip is to attend the sales meeting.	principal
8. <i>regardless</i> or <i>irregardless</i>	_____ of what we do, gas prices are unlikely to go back down.	Regardless	_____ of your beliefs, please try to listen with an open mind.	Regardless (<i>irregardless</i> is not a standard word; see your dictionary)
9. <i>than</i> or <i>then</i>	This year's losses were worse _____ last year's.	than	If we can cut our costs, _____ it might be possible to break even.	then
10. <i>that</i> or <i>which</i>	_____ type of marketing data did you need?	Which	Karen misplaced the report, _____ caused a delay in making a decision.	which
	There are several kinds of data _____ could be useful.	that		
11 <i>there</i> <i>their</i> , or <i>they're</i>	The report is _____, in the top file drawer.	there	_____ strategic advantage depends on a wide distribution network.	Their
	_____ planning to attend the sales meeting in Pittsburgh.	They're		
12. <i>to</i> <i>too</i> , or <i>two</i>	Customers need _____ drive slower if they want to save gas.	to	After sales meeting, you should visit customers in the Pittsburgh area _____.	too
	In fact, the _____ of you should make some customer visits together.	two		
13. <i>uninterested</i> or <i>disinterested</i>	He would be the best person to make a decision, since he isn't biased and is relatively _____ in the outcome.	disinterested	The sales manager tried to speak dynamically, but the sales reps were simply _____ in what he had to say.	uninterested

14. <i>who, whom, who's, or whose</i>	_____ truck is that?	Whose	_____ going to pay for the repairs?	Who's
	_____ will go to the interview?	Who	To _____ should we address the thank-you note?	whom
15 <i>your or you're</i>	My office is bigger than _____ cubicle.	your	_____ going to learn how to avoid making these common mistakes in English.	You're

If all the world is a stage then you, as a business writer, must be the script writer, correct? Actually, those who employ you, specify your job duties, manage the business, and designate which problems you are to solve are more like the script writers, directors, and producers. So what role does that leave you as a business writer? Actor. You may not be seen “on stage” by the suppliers you write, the departments you inform with your reports, or the customers you serve, but your writing represents you and your organization. As an actor must learn his or her lines, you too must learn the role of a business writer within the context of your business or organization. It may well be that you are allowed a degree of improvisation and creativity when you interpret your role, or it could be the case that many of the written documents you will produce follow a standard template, much like a script, that designates your lines before the writing process begins. Knowing your place on stage and how it relates to your business is an important aspect of business writing best not ignored.

This chapter focuses on several strategies for success when it comes to the creative process of writing, and your awareness of these skills will prove invaluable as your responsibility increases and your ability to shape documents develops. Never lose sight of the fact that each document exists with a universe of relationships and interaction; it does not stand alone. Also remember that what you write today, particularly if you “publish” it on the Internet, will be there for years to come. Always consider how your words will represent you and your organization when you are not there to clarify, defend, or correct them. Your audience will have expectations of you, as will your employer, and as an effective business writer you know that one key to success is meeting these expectations.

Creative writing for exposition, narration, and self-expression is an important part of writing, but in the business context you have a role, job duties, and responsibilities both internal and external to your organization. Your mastery of clear and concise writing will directly affect the interpretation, and misinterpretation, of your message. Your goal remains to reduce misunderstandings through the effective and efficient use of words in business documents, and the well-known mandate to “Omit needless words” stands true. Up to this point you have been preparing to write, but now the moment has come for performance.

References

Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E. B. (1979). *The elements of style* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Macmillian.

PART VII

CHAPTER 7: REVISING AND PRESENTING YOUR WRITING

I'm not a very good writer, but I'm an excellent rewriter.

–James A. Michener

Half my life is an act of revision.

–John Irving

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Find an article you read online and review it, noting at least one area that would benefit from revision. Please share your results with classmates.
2. Exchange draft revisions of a document prepared for a class or work assignment with a classmate or colleague. Note at least one strength and one area for improvement, Provide feedback to the writer.

One of the hardest tests to pass is the one of peer review. In the academic environment, professors conduct research, learn lessons, and share their findings by contributing articles for professional journals. Each academic journal article undergoes peer review, or evaluation by colleagues in the same field as the professor who wrote the article. These evaluations, often conducted by leaders in each field, do not only consider the value of the writer's findings. They also evaluate the mechanics of the document (spelling and grammar) and its presentation, organization, and design. The first time a scholar submits an article for peer review, he or she can expect rejections and liberal use of the red pen.

You may not experience such a rigorous and vigorous review of your writing, but in many ways the world of business is equally challenging. Academic publications ultimately value solid findings that contribute to the field or discipline. Business writing ultimately values writing that produces results or outcomes in environments where you do not have the luxury of controlling the variables, designing the context, or limiting the scope of your inquiry. Your business document will be evaluated by people you never met or even anticipated would read it, and errors will have a negative impact on its performance.

In every career, industry, and profession, today's business climate is a results-oriented environment. Regardless of what you write, there exists the possibility, even probability, that misunderstandings and miscommunications can and will occur. Although you will not always have control over the importance of the ideas you are assigned to communicate in your writing, there is one thing you can control: errors. If you avoid mistakes, both in the document itself and in the way your audience interprets your message, your document will have its best chance of success. To this end a thorough revision is an important part of your writing process.

As you review and evaluate documents, those written by you and others, you will need to keep in mind the

three goals of being correct, clear, and concise. Next you will have to focus on effectiveness and efficiency, recognizing that in a climate of increasing demands and limited resources like time, you need to get it right the first time.

The environment of a business writer can be stressful, but it can also be rewarding. Recognition from your peers—suppliers, internal department colleagues, or customers—can make it all worthwhile. Still, the reward in terms of acknowledgement may come in the form of silence. When your document clearly meets expectations and accomplishes its goal, the outcome may be the absence of error or misinterpretation, a rare occasion that often goes unheralded. As a business writer you need to value your work and note what works. When it does, take pride in your hard work in effort. You may not always be celebrated for your error-free documents that communicate concepts and ideas clearly, but know that they are successful, and their success is your success.

PART VIII

CHAPTER 8: FEEDBACK IN THE WRITING PROCESS

Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfills the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things.

–Winston Churchill

Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain but it takes character and self control to be understanding and forgiving.

–Dale Carnegie

He has a right to criticize, who has a heart to help.

–Abraham Lincoln

Speaking is silver, listening is gold.

–Turkish proverb

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Find a news Web site that includes a forum for reader comments on the articles. Read an article that interests you and the comments readers have posted about it. Please share your results with classmates.
2. Interview a colleague, coworker, or someone in a business or industry you are involved or interested in. Ask them how they receive feedback about their work. Please share your results with classmates.
3. Review a document (online or offline) and create at least two different examples of how a reader may respond to the content and presentation. Please share your results with classmates.

The feedback loop is your connection to your audience. It's always there, even if you haven't noticed it. In today's business environment, across a variety of careers and industries, people are taking serious note of the power of feedback. How does a viral marketing campaign take off? How does an article get passed along Twitter? How does a movie review, and its long list of discussion thread comments, influence your viewing decisions? How do Wikipedia, the Global Business Network, or customer book reviews on Amazon.com impact us, alter our views, or motivate us to write?

“The feedback loop provides you with an open and direct channel of communication with your community, and that represents a never-available-before opportunity” (Powel, 2009). The feedback on what you write has never been as direct and interactive as today's online environment can provide, and the need to anticipate, lead, listen,

and incorporate lessons learned has never been greater. This chapter examines feedback in its many forms and how it can and will have an impact on what you write, and how you write it.

What you write does not exist in a vacuum, unaffected by the world around it. It may be that what you write is read by a relatively small group of readers, or by a large target audience who may have only read a few of your messages. Either way, what you write is part of the communication process, and it makes an impact whether you know it or not.

This chapter recognizes the writing process and its components with an emphasis on feedback. Do you know the difference between indirect and direct feedback? Are you aware of effective strategies to elicit valuable feedback? How do you know if the feedback is valid? To what extent, and in what ways, should you adapt and adjust your writing based on feedback? These are central questions in the writing process, and any skilled business writer recognizes the need for improvement based on solid feedback. You may not always enjoy receiving feedback, but you should always give it due thought and consideration. Failure to change and adapt has many unfortunate consequences (Johnson, 1998). It is up to you to seek good information and to separate the reliable from the unreliable in your goal of improving your business writing.

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PART IX

CHAPTER 9: BUSINESS WRITING IN ACTION

If you call failures experiments, you can put them in your résumé and claim them as achievements.

–Mason Cooley

Volunteer—not so you can build your résumé, but so you can build yourself.

–Author Unknown

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Review the different kinds of common business communication writing covered by the main headings in this chapter. Make a note of which kinds of documents you have produced in the past and which you have not. For example, have you written many memos but not a business report? Share and compare with classmates.
2. Conduct an online search for job descriptions associated with your chosen career and think about what tasks are accomplished in a typical day or week. If possible, also talk to someone who is employed in that career. Note the kinds of writing skills that are involved in carrying out job duties or tasks. Share your results with the class.

Business communication in written form requires skill and expertise. From text messages to reports, how you represent yourself with the written word counts. Writing in an online environment requires tact and skill, and an awareness that what you write may be there forever. From memos to letters, from business proposals to press releases, your written business communication represents you and your company: your goal is to make it clear, concise, and professional.

PART X
CHAPTER 10: DEVELOPING BUSINESS
PRESENTATIONS

It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.
–Mark Twain

Being in the right does not depend on having a loud voice.
–Chinese Proverb

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Complete the following self-inventory by brainstorming as many items as you can for each category. Think about anything you know, find interesting, or are involved in which relates to the topics below. Have you traveled to a different city, state, or country? Do you have any projects in other classes you find interesting? List them in the questions below.

- What do you read?
- What do you play or do for fun?
- What do you watch (visual media)?
- Where do you live or have you lived?
- What places have you visited (travel)?
- Whom do you know?
- What's important to you?
- If you could change one thing in the world, what would it be?

Choose your three favorite categories from the list above and circle them. Then ask a friend what they would be most interested in hearing about. Ask more than one friend, and keep score of which item attracts the most attention. Make sure you keep track of who likes which category.

Introductory Exercises (cont.)

2. What do you know about the world?
1. What is the most populous country on the planet?

2. The United States is home to more foreign-born residents than any other country. Which country has the next-highest number of foreign-born residents (Bremner, J., et. al., 2009)?
3. As of 2008, what percentage of the world's population lived in an urban setting?
4. The world's population was about 6.5 billion in early 2009. In what year is this figure expected to double to 13 billion (Rosenberg, M., 2009)?

Answers: 1. c, 2. a, 3. c, 4. c.

Mark Twain makes a valid point that presentations require preparation. If you have the luxury of time to prepare, take full advantage of it. Speeches don't always happen when or how we envision them. Preparation becomes especially paramount when the element of unknown is present, forcing us to improvise. One mistake or misquote can and will be quickly rebroadcast, creating lasting damage. Take full advantage of the time to prepare for what you can anticipate, but also consider the element of surprise. In this chapter we discuss the planning and preparation necessary to prepare an effective presentation. You will be judged on how well you present yourself, so take the time when available to prepare.

Now that you are concerned with getting started and preparing a speech for work or class, let's consider the first step. It may be that you are part of a team developing a sales presentation, preparing to meet with a specific client in a one-on-one meeting, or even setting up a teleconference. Your first response may be that a meeting is not a speech, but your part of the conversation has a lot in common with a formal presentation. You need to prepare, you need to organize your message, and you need to consider audience's expectations, their familiarity with the topic, and even individual word choices that may improve your effectiveness. Regardless whether your presentation is to one individual (interpersonal) or many (group), it has as its foundation the act of communication. Communication itself is a dynamic and complex process, and the degree to which you can prepare and present effectively across a range of settings will enhance your success as a business communicator.

If you have been assigned a topic by the teacher or your supervisor, you may be able to go straight to the section on narrowing your topic. If not, then the first part of this chapter will help you. This chapter will help you step by step in preparing for your speech or oral presentation. By the time you have finished this chapter, you will have chosen a topic for your speech, narrowed the topic, and analyzed the appropriateness of the topic for yourself as well as the audience. From this basis, you will have formulated a general purpose statement and specific thesis statement to further define the topic of your speech. Building on the general and specific purpose statements you formulate, you will create an outline for your oral presentation.

Through this chapter, you will become more knowledgeable about the process of creating a speech and gain confidence in your organizational abilities. Preparation and organization are two main areas that, when well developed prior to an oral presentation, significantly contribute to reducing your level of speech anxiety. If you are well prepared, you will be more relaxed when it is time to give your speech. Effective business communicators have excellent communication skills that can be learned through experience and practice. In this chapter we will work together to develop your skills in preparing clear and concise messages to reach your target audience.

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PART XI

CHAPTER II: NONVERBAL DELIVERY

The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.

–Peter F. Drucker

But behavior in the human being is sometimes a defense, a way of concealing motives and thoughts.

–Abraham Maslow

Electric communication will never be a substitute for the face of someone who with their soul encourages another person to be brave and true.

–Charles Dickens

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. It's not just what you say but how you say it. Choose a speech to watch. Examples may include famous speeches by historical figures like Martin Luther King Jr. or Winston Churchill, current elected officials, or perhaps candidates for local and state office that may be televised. Other examples could be from a poetry slam, a rap performance, or a movie. Watch the presentation without sound and see what you observe. Does the speaker seem comfortable and confident? Aggressive or timid? If possible, repeat the speech a second time with the sound on. Do your perceptions change? What patterns do you observe?
2. Invasion of space. When someone “invades” your space, how do you feel? Threatened, surprised, interested, or repulsed? We can learn a lot from each other as we come to be more aware of the normative space expectations and boundaries. Set aside ten minutes where you can “people watch” in a public setting. Make a conscious effort to notice how far apart they stand from people they communicate. Record your results. Your best estimate is fine and there is no need to interrupt people, just watch and record. Consider noting if they are male or female, or focus only on same-sex conversations. When you have approximate distances for at least twenty conversations or ten minutes have passed, add up the results and look for a pattern. Compare your findings with those of a classmate.

In the first of the Note 11.1 “Introductory Exercises” for this chapter, we focus on how a speaker presents ideas, not the ideas themselves. Have you ever been in class and found it hard to listen to the professor, not because he or she wasn't well informed or the topic wasn't interesting or important to you, but because the style of presentation didn't engage you as a listener? If your answer is yes, then you know that you want to avoid making the same mistake when you give a presentation. It's not always what you say, but how you say it that makes

a difference. We sometimes call this “body language,” or “nonverbal communication,” and it is a key aspect of effective business communication.

How do you know when your boss or instructors are pleased with your progress (or not)? You might know from the smiles on their faces, from the time and attention they give you, or perhaps in other nonverbal ways, like a raise, a bonus, or a good grade. Whether the interaction takes place face-to-face, or at a distance, you can still experience and interpret nonverbal responses.

Sometimes we place more emphasis on nonverbal aspects of communication than they warrant. Suppose you have just gotten home from your first date with Amanda and you feel it went very well. How soon should afterward should you call Amanda? There are lots of advice columns, informal rules and customs, and friends with opinions to offer you suggestions, but you know what is right for you. You also know that texting her at five o'clock the next morning might be a bit early. You may choose to wait until a coffee break around 10 a.m. to send a short text message, and realize that you might not get a response until later that afternoon.

Does the lack of an immediate response have any meaning? Does it mean Amanda is less interested in you than you are in her? While you might give it more attention than it deserves, and maybe let it weigh on your mind and distract you from other tasks, the time interval for responding may not have as much intentional meaning as you think. It might mean that Amanda has a different sense of time urgency than you do, or that she simply didn't receive your message until later.

Timing is an important aspect of nonverbal communication, but trying to understand what a single example of timing means is challenging. Context may make a difference. For example, if you have known someone for years who has always responded promptly to your e-mails or texts, but now that person hasn't responded in over a day, you may have reason for concern. That person's behavior doesn't match what you are familiar with, and this sudden, unexplained change in the established pattern may mean that you need to follow up.

PART XII

CHAPTER 12: ORGANIZATION AND OUTLINES

Speech is power; speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel.

–Ralph Waldo Emerson

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Please read the following paragraph and rearrange the sentences in logical order:

A. I saw “The Day After Tomorrow” recently. B. The Northern Seas got very cold, very quickly. C. People in the United States fled to Mexico. D. Have you ever seen a movie you just couldn’t forget? E. Soon it was hailing, snowing, and raining all around the world. F. In the movie there was a scientist who forecast a sudden change in the climate. G. They were declared illegal aliens and not allowed in the country. H. The film made me think about global warming and global politics. I. The U.S. president forgave their debts, and the Mexican president allowed U.S. citizens to cross the border.
2. Consider the following words and find at least two ways to organize the words into groups.
 - Knife
 - Fork
 - Spoon
 - Corkscrew

Answers

1. D, A, F, B, E, C, G, I, H
2. Table service (knife, fork, spoon), sharp implements (knife, fork, corkscrew), Tools (all). Can you think of any other organizational principles by which to group these items?

In earlier stages of preparation for a speech, you have gained a good idea of who your audience is and what information you want to focus on. This chapter will help you consider how to organize the information to cover your topic. You may be tempted to think that you know enough about your topic that you can just “wing it” or go “freestyling.” Your organization might be something like this: “First, I’ll talk about this, then I’ll give this example, and I’ll wrap it up with this.” While knowledge on your topic is key to an effective speech, do not underestimate the importance of organization. You may start to give your speech thinking you’ll follow the “outline” in your mind, and then suddenly your mind will go blank. If it doesn’t go blank, you may finish what was planned as a five-minute speech with three minutes remaining, sit down, and then start to remember all the things you

intended to say but didn't. To your listeners, your presentation may have sounded like the first of the Note 12.1 "Introductory Exercises" for this chapter—a bunch of related ideas that were scattered and unorganized.

Organization in your speech is helpful both to you and to your audience. Your audience will appreciate hearing the information presented in an organized way, and being well organized will make the speaking situation much less stressful for you. You might forget a point and be able to glance at your outline and get back on track. Your listeners will see that you took your responsibility as a speaker seriously and will be able to listen more attentively. They'll be able to link your key points in their minds, and the result will be a more effective speech.

An extemporaneous speech involves flexibility and organization. You know your material. You are prepared and follow an outline. You do not read a script or PowerPoint presentation, you do not memorize every single word in order (though some parts may be memorized), but you also do not make it up as you go along. Your presentation is scripted in the sense that it is completely planned from start to finish, yet every word is not explicitly planned, allowing for some spontaneity and adaptation to the audience's needs in the moment. This extemporaneous approach is the most common form used in business and industry today.

Your organization plan will serve you and your audience as a guide, and help you present a more effective speech. If you are concerned with grades, it will no doubt help you improve your score as well. If you work in a career where your "grades" are sales, and a sales increase means getting an "A," then your ability to organize will help you make the grade. Just as there is no substitute for practice and preparation, there is no substitute for organization and an outline when you need it the most: on stage. Do yourself and the audience a favor and create an outline with an organization pattern that best meets your needs.

In the 1991 film *What about Bob?* a psychiatrist presents the simple idea to the patient, played by actor Bill Murray. If the patient takes whatever he needs to do step by step, the process he once perceived as complex becomes simple. In this same way, your understanding of giving business presentations will develop step by step, as the process and its important elements unfold. Read and reflect on how each area might influence your speech, how it might involve or impact your audience, and how your purpose guides your strategies as you plan your speech.

If you take it step by step, presenting a speech can be an exhilarating experience not unlike winning a marathon or climbing a high peak. Every journey begins with a first step, and in terms of communication, you've already taken countless steps in your lifetime. Now we'll take the next step and begin to analyze the process of public speaking.

PART XIII

CHAPTER 13: PRESENTATIONS TO INFORM

*After all, the ultimate goal of all research is not objectivity, but truth.
–Helene Deutsch*

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Please make a list of five activities you have participated in recently. Choose one and create a time order list, from start to finish, of at least five major steps involved in accomplishing the activity.
2. From the list of five activities above, please consider which of the activities the audience (or your class) has probably had the least experience with. Now make a list from that activity of at least three things you would explain to them so that they could better understand it. From that new list, consider how you might show those three things, including visual aids.

Storytelling is a basic part of human communication. You've probably told several short stories just today to relate to friends what the drive to school was like, how your partner has been acting, what your boss said to a customer, or even what your speech teacher did in class. With each story you were sharing information, but is sharing the same as informing? At first you might be tempted to say "sure," but consider whether you had a purpose for telling a friend about another friend's actions, or if the words you used to discuss your boss communicated any attitude.

At some point in your business career you will be called upon to teach someone something. It may be a customer, coworker, or supervisor, and in each case you are performing an informative speech. It is distinct from a sales speech, or persuasive speech, in that your goal is to communicate the information so that your listener understands. For example, let's say you have the task of teaching a customer how to use a remote control (which button does what) to program a DVD/R to record. Easy, you say? Sure, it's easy for you. But for them it is new, so take a moment and consider their perspective. You may recommend this unit versus that unit, and aim for a sale, but that goal is separate from first teaching them to be successful at a task they want to learn to perform. You may need to repeat yourself several times, and they may not catch on as fast as you expect, but their mastery of the skill or task they want to learn can directly lead to a sale. They will have more confidence in you and in themselves once they've mastered the task, and will be more receptive to your advice about the competing products available.

While your end goal may be a sale, the relationship you form has more long-term value. That customer may tell a friend about the experience, show their family what they learned, and before you know it someone else comes in asking for you by name. Communicating respect and focusing on their needs is a positive first step. The informative speech is one performance you'll give many times across your career, whether your audience is one person, a small group, or a large auditorium full of listeners. Once you master the art of the informative speech, you may mix and match it with other styles and techniques.

PART XIV

CHAPTER 14: PRESENTATIONS TO PERSUADE

We are more easily persuaded, in general, by the reasons that we ourselves discover than by those which are given to us by others.

–Pascal

For every sale you miss because you're too enthusiastic, you will miss a hundred because you're not enthusiastic enough.

–Zig Ziglar

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Please list three things that you recently purchased, preferably in the last twenty-four hours—the things can be items or services. Decide which purchase on your list stands out as most important to you and consider why you made that purchase decision. See if you can list three reasons. Now pretend you are going to sell that same item or service to a friend—would the three reasons remain the same, or would you try additional points for them to consider? Compare your results with a classmate.
2. Please think of one major purchase you made in the past year. It should be significant to you, and not a daily or monthly purchase. Once you made the purchase decision and received the item (e.g., a car), did you notice similar cars on the roads? Did you pay attention to details like color, modifications, or reports in the popular press about quality? Did you talk to your friends about it? What kind of information did you pay attention to—information that reinforced your purchase decision, or information that detracted from your appreciation of your newly acquired possession? Discuss your responses with classmates.

No doubt there has been a time when you wanted something from your parents, your supervisor, or your friends, and you thought about how you were going to present your request. But do you think about how often people—including people you have never met and never will meet—want something from you? When you watch television, advertisements reach out for your attention, whether you watch them or not. When you use the Internet, pop-up advertisements often appear. Living in the United States, and many parts of the world, means that you have been surrounded, even inundated, by persuasive messages. Mass media in general and television in particular make a significant impact you will certainly recognize.

Consider these facts:

- The average person sees between four hundred and six hundred ads per day—that is forty million to fifty million by the time he or she is sixty years old. One of every eleven commercials has a direct message about beauty (Raimondo M., 2010).

- By age eighteen, the average American teenager will have spent more time watching television—25,000 hours—than learning in a classroom (Ship, J., 2005).
- An analysis of music videos found that nearly one-fourth of all MTV videos portray overt violence, with attractive role models being aggressors in more than 80 percent of the violent videos (DuRant, R. H., 1997).
- Forty percent of nine- and ten-year-old girls have tried to lose weight, according to an ongoing study funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (Body image and nutrition: Fast facts., 2009).
- A 1996 study found that the amount of time an adolescent watches soaps, movies, and music videos is associated with their degree of body dissatisfaction and desire to be thin (Tiggemann, M. and Pickering, A. S., 1996).
- Identification with television stars (for girls and boys), models (girls), or athletes (boys) positively correlated with body dissatisfaction (Hofschire, L. J. and Greenberg, B. S., 2002).
- At age thirteen, 53 percent of American girls are “unhappy with their bodies.” This grows to 78 percent by the time they reach seventeen (Brumber, J. J., 1997).
- By age eighteen, the average American teenager will witness on television 200,000 acts of violence, including 40,000 murders (Huston, A. C., et al., 1992).

Mass communication contains persuasive messages, often called propaganda, in narrative form, in stories and even in presidential speeches. When President Bush made his case for invading Iraq, his speeches incorporated many of the techniques we’ll cover in this chapter. Your local city council often involves dialogue, and persuasive speeches, to determine zoning issues, resource allocation, and even spending priorities. You yourself have learned many of the techniques by trial and error and through imitation. If you ever wanted the keys to your parents’ car for a special occasion, you used the principles of persuasion to reach your goal.

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PART XV

CHAPTER 15: BUSINESS PRESENTATIONS IN ACTION

Personnel directors have described their needs in prospective employers as follows:

“Send me people who know how to speak, listen, and think, and I’ll do the rest. I can train people in their specific job responsibilities, as long as they listen well, know how to think, and can express themselves well (Seiler and Beall, 2009).”

“For better or worse, our culture relies on quotations—literary passages, Bible verses, movie lines, song lyrics, catchphrases, proverbs—to transmit the wit and wisdom of the past and the present and to lend resonance to our everyday discourse. Perhaps the most important are the political quotes, the sound bites, slogans, zingers and bloopers that can win or lose elections and shape our arguments and opinions. —Fred R. Shapiro (Shapiro, 2008).”

Getting Started

INTRODUCTORY EXERCISES

1. Prepare a short summary of your experience in public speaking. Include one example and one goal you would like to set for yourself for improvement. Share and compare with classmates.
2. Who is your favorite speaker? Write a brief introduction for them and include why you find them particularly talented. Share and compare with classmates.

No matter what career you pursue or what level of success you achieve, on some occasions you will certainly find it necessary to introduce yourself or another speaker, accept an award, serve as master of ceremonies at a meeting, or make a comment to the media. Each task requires preparation and practice, and a solid understanding of the roles and responsibilities associated with the many activities you may perform as a successful business communicator. In this chapter we explore many of these common activities with brief discussions and activities to prepare you for the day when the responsibility falls to you.

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PART XVI

CHAPTER 16: INTRAPERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Identity is the essential core of who we are as individuals, the conscious experience of the self inside.

–Kauffman

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Define yourself in five words or less.
2. Describe yourself in no less than twenty words and no more than fifty.
3. List what is important to you in priority order. List what you spend your time on in rank order. Compare the results.

What are you doing? This simple question is at the heart of an application that allows user to stay hyperconnected. Before we consider the social media and its implications on business communication, let's first examine the central question Twitter asks its users to address in 140 characters or less.

What are you doing right now? Are you reading, learning, or have you already tuned out this introduction and skipped over to Twitter to see what your friends are up to? We often define ourselves through action, but the definition doesn't work very well. When you are a newborn baby, your actions represented a small percentage of your potential—now that you're older, you are more than an eating machine that requires constant care and feeding—but what are you? A common response may be “human,” but even that can be challenging to define. If we say humans are the tool makers and then note that several nonhuman species from primates to otters make and use tools, where does that leave us? You could say that a human has two arms, two legs, or two eyes, but not everyone has these, so the definition fails yet again. You may want to say that you can communicate, but we don't all speak the same language, and communication is a universal process across species. You may be tempted to respond to the question “what are you?” by saying something along the lines of “I think, therefore I am”—but what is thinking, and are humans the only species with the ability to think? Again, defining yourself through your ability to think may not completely work. Finally, you may want to raise the possibility of your ability to reason and act, recall the past, be conscious of the present, and imagine the future; or your ability to contemplate the abstract, the ironic, even the absurd. Now we might be getting somewhere.

What does the word “party” mean to you? Most cultures have rituals where people come together in a common space for conversation and sharing. Such gatherings often include food, music, and dancing. In our modern society, we increasingly lack time to connect with others. It may be too expensive or time-consuming to travel across the country for Thanksgiving, but we may meet on Skype and talk (audio/video) at relatively little or no

cost. Some of your instructors may have traveled to a designated location for a professional conference each year, seeing colleagues and networking; but in recent years time, cost, and competition for attention has shifted priorities for many. We may have two (or three or four) jobs that consume much of our time, but you'll notice that in the breaks and pauses of life people reach for their cell phones to connect. We instant message (IM), text message, tweet, e-mail, and interact. As humans, we have an innate need to connect with each other, even when that connection can (and does) sometimes produce conflict.

When we ask the question, "What are you doing?" the answer invariably involves communication; communication with self, with others, in verbal (oral and written) and nonverbal ways. How do we come to this and how does it influence our experience within the business environment? How do we come to enter a new community through a rite of initiation, often called a job interview, only to find ourselves lost as everyone speaks a new language, the language of the workplace? How do we negotiate relationships, demands for space and time, across meetings, collaborative efforts, and solo projects? This chapter addresses several of these issues as we attempt to answer the question, "What are you doing?" with the answer: communicating.

PART XVII

CHAPTER 17: NEGATIVE NEWS AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION

You don't hear things that are bad about your company unless you ask. It is easy to hear good tidings, but you have to scratch to get the bad news.
-Thomas J. Watson Sr.

One day, today, is worth two tomorrows.
-Anonymous

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Write a brief description of an experience when someone shared negative news with you in person or in writing. How was it presented? How was it delivered? How did it make you feel? After all this time, how do you still feel about it? Share your response and compare with classmates.
2. Write a brief description of an experience when you shared negative news with someone in person or in writing. How did you present it? How did you deliver it? How did you feel, and what was your perception of how it was received? How do you feel about it now? How do you perceive the recipient of the negative news may feel about it today? Share your response and compare with classmates.
3. Locate the emergency plan where you work or go to school. What would you do in the case of an emergency? Discuss with classmates.
4. Can you think of one company that has had a scandal, a major problem, or a crisis in the last year? Indicate the company and your perception of how the situation was handled. Discuss with classmates.
5. Find five examples of press conferences and create a table with the product or service and the message.
6. From Introductory Exercise 5, add a third and fourth column to your table, noting whether you thought the message was effective or ineffective.

Communication is constant, but is it always effective? In times of confusion or crisis, clear and concise communication takes on an increased level of importance. When an emergency arises, rumors can spin out of control, emotions can run high, feelings can be hurt, and in some cases lives can tragically be lost. In this chapter we will examine several scenarios in which negative news is delivered or received, and examine ways to improve communication. We will conclude with a discussion of a formal crisis communication plan. Whether you anticipate the necessity of being the bearer of unpleasant or bad news, or a sudden and unexpected crisis occurs, your thoughtful preparation can make all the difference.

PART XVIII

CHAPTER 18: INTERCULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

We should never denigrate any other culture but rather help people to understand the relationship between their own culture and the dominant culture. When you understand another culture or language, it does not mean that you have to lose your own culture.

–Edward T. Hall

I've been traveling all over the world for 25 years, performing, talking to people, studying their cultures and musical instruments, and I always come away with more questions in my head than can be answered.

–Yo-Yo Ma

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Find a film where one person overcomes all obstacles. Make notes of your observations on how he or she approaches the world, solves problems, and rises triumphant
2. Find a film where a group of people overcomes obstacles through joint effort. Make notes of your observations on how they approach the world, solve problems, and rise triumphant.
3. Consider a culture with which you have had little interaction. Write down at least five terms to describe that culture.

As a professional in the modern business community, you need to be aware that the very concept of community is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Throughout the world's history—until recently—a community was defined by its geographic boundaries. A merchant supplied salt and sugar, and people made what they needed. The products the merchant sold were often produced locally because the cost of transportation was significant. A transcontinental railroad brought telegraph lines, shipping routes, and brought ports together from coast to coast. Shipping that once took months and years was now measured in days. A modern highway system and cheap oil products allowed for that measurement unit to be reduced to days and minutes. Just in time product delivery reduced storage costs, from renting a warehouse at the port to spoilage in transit. As products sold, bar code and RDIF (radio frequency identification) tagged items instantly updated inventories and initiated orders at factories all over the world.

Communication, both oral and written, linked communities in ways that we failed to recognize until economic turmoil in one place led to job loss, in a matter of days or minutes, thousands of miles away. A system of trade and the circulation of capital and goods that once flowed relatively seamlessly have been challenged by change, misunderstanding, and conflict. People learn of political, economic, and military turmoil that is instantly

translated into multiple market impacts. Integrated markets and global networks bind us together in ways we are just now learning to appreciate, anticipate, and understand. Intercultural and international communication are critical areas of study with readily apparent, real-world consequences.

Agrarian, industrial, and information ages gave way to global business and brought the importance of communication across cultures to the forefront. The Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Thomas Friedman calls this new world “flat,” (Friedman, T., 2005) noting how the integration of markets and community had penetrated the daily lives of nearly everyone on the planet, regardless of language or culture. While the increasing ease of telecommunications and travel have transformed the nature of doing business, Friedman argues that “the dawning ‘flat world’ is a jungle pitting ‘lions’ and ‘gazelles,’ where ‘economic stability is not going to be a feature’ and ‘the weak will fall farther behind’” (Publishers Weekly, 2009). Half of the world’s population that earn less than \$2 (USD) a day felt the impact of a reduction in trade and fluctuations in commodity prices even though they may not have known any of the details. Rice, for example, became an even more valuable commodity than ever; to the individuals who could not find it, grow it, or earn enough to buy it, the hunger felt was personal and global. International trade took on a new level of importance.

Intercultural and international business communication has taken on a new role for students as well as career professionals. Knowing when the European and Asian markets open has become mandatory; so has awareness of multiple time zones and their importance in relation to trade, shipping, and the production cycle. Managing production in China from an office in Chicago has become common. Receiving technical assistance for your computer often means connecting with a well-educated English speaker in New Delhi. We compete with each other via Elance.com or oDesk.com for contracts and projects, selecting the currency of choice for each bid as we can be located anywhere on the planet. Communities are no longer linked as simply “brother” and “sister” cities in symbolic partnerships. They are linked in the daily trade of goods and services.

In this chapter, we explore this dynamic aspect of communication. If the foundation of communication is important, its application in this context is critical. Just as Europe once formed intercontinental alliances for the trade of metals—leading to the development of a common currency, trade zone, and new concept of nation-state—now North and South America are following with increased integration. Major corporations are no longer affiliated with only one country or one country’s interests but instead perceive the integrated market as team members across global trade. “Made in X” is more of a relative statement as products, from cars to appliances to garments, now come with a list of where components were made and assembled and what percentage corresponds to each nation.

Figure 18.1



With modern manufacturing, "Made in X" is more of a relative statement.

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Global business is more than trade between companies located in distinct countries; indeed, that concept is already outdated. Intercultural and international business focuses less on the borders that separate people and more on the communication that brings them together. Business communication values clear, concise interaction that promotes efficiency and effectiveness. You may perceive your role as a business communicator within a specific city, business, or organization, but you need to be aware that your role crosses cultures, languages, value and legal systems, and borders.

References

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PART XIX

CHAPTER 19: GROUP COMMUNICATION, TEAMWORK, AND LEADERSHIP

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.

–Andrew Carnegie

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

–Margaret Mead

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. List the family and social groups you belong to and interact with on a regular basis—for example, within a twenty-four-hour period or within a typical week. Please also consider forums, online communities, and Web sites where you follow threads of discussion or post regularly. Discuss your results with your classmates.
2. List the professional (i.e., work-related) groups you interact with in order of frequency. Please also consider informal as well as formal groups (e.g., the 10:30 coffee club and the colleagues you often share your commute with). Compare your results with those of your classmates.
3. Identify one group to which you no longer belong. List at least one reason why you no longer belong to this group. Compare your results with those of your classmates.

As humans, we are social beings. We naturally form relationships with others. In fact, relationships are often noted as one of the most important aspects of a person's life, and they exist in many forms. Interpersonal communication occurs between two people, but group communication may involve two or more individuals. Groups are a primary context for interaction within the business community. Groups may have heroes, enemies, and sages alongside new members. Groups overlap and may share common goals, but they may also engage in conflict. Groups can be supportive or coercive and can exert powerful influences over individuals.

Within a group, individuals may behave in distinct ways, use unique or specialized terms, or display symbols that have meaning to that group. Those same terms or symbols may be confusing, meaningless, or even unacceptable to another group. An individual may belong to both groups, adapting his or her communication patterns to meet group normative expectations. Groups are increasingly important across social media venues, and there are many examples of successful business ventures on the Web that value and promote group interaction.

Groups use words to exchange meaning, establish territory, and identify who is a stranger versus who is a

trusted member. Are you familiar with the term “troll”? It is often used to identify someone who is not a member of an online group or community; does not share the values and beliefs of the group; and posts a message in an online discussion board to initiate flame wars, cause disruption, or otherwise challenge the group members. Members often use words to respond to the challenge that are not otherwise common in the discussions, and the less than flattering descriptions of the troll are a rallying point.

Groups have existed throughout human history and continue to follow familiar patterns across emerging venues as we adapt to technology, computer-mediated interaction, suburban sprawl, and modern life. We need groups, and groups need us. Our relationship with groups warrants attention on this interdependence as we come to know our communities, our world, and ourselves.