COMMUNICATING FOR RESULTS

A GUIDE FOR BUSINESS AND THE PROFESSIONS

Cheryl Hamilton

Cordell Parker

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PREFACE

As Americans have become more concerned with declining productivity in the workplace, the importance of communication skills to individual and organizational productivity has received renewed interest; and the productivity of an organization begins, of course, with the productivity of its individual members. Managers and employers who are skilled communicators have fewer misunderstandings, make fewer mistakes, create less waste, and are able to deal with disagreements among employees and between management and employees more effectively. Thus they are more productive.

Communicating for Results is directed at today's student who is interested in self-improvement. As such, it is designed to introduce needed communication skills to students with very little work experience, to improve the communication skills of entry-level managers and employees, and to serve as a reference book for experienced professionals who wish to refresh or update their communication skills.

Equal emphasis is given to interpersonal, interviewing and group, and public communication skills. *Interpersonal skills* include decreasing misunderstandings with others, giving clear instructions, improving listening, interpreting and using nonverbal communication, and improving communication with bosses, colleagues, and employees. *Interviewing* and *group skills* include conducting or participating in interviews of various types, knowing what questions are unlawful in pre-employment interviews, conducting and participating in conferences, making decisions in small groups, and handling conflict. *Public communication skills* include giving oral briefings, reports, or persuasive presentations to employees, managers, or groups outside the organization.

To verify the importance of these communication skills in business, the manuscript was carefully reviewed not only by educators in the speech communication and business fields, but also by professionals in the business world. The experiences of many of these professionals have been included. Each chapter was also evaluated by students enrolled in business and professional communication courses taught by the authors.

Although the chapters in this book may be referred to in any order, they are organized so that each builds on the skills taught in the preceding ones. The skills are dealt with in a practical manner and lend themselves to immediate application. In other words, what is read today can be applied at work tomorrow.

It is our hope that the reader will find this book valuable enough to add to his or her personal library.

For their helpful reviews and suggestions we would like to thank the following people from the business world: Mary Jackson, manager of research and engineering operating plans; W. R. LePoint, manager of production engineering controls; W. R. Kiefer, vice president of operations; and Doris S. Redd, associate planning engineer—all from a large aerospace corporation—and the following business people who share their experiences in the book: Robert McKibben, administrator for the California Youth Authority; Basilisia Herndon, vice president of AAA Roofing Equipment, Inc.; Patricia Wade, neurobiologist at Rockefeller University; Susan Hagar, engineer with the Environmental Protection Agency; and Dan Peoples, senior writer for Wicks Companies, Inc.

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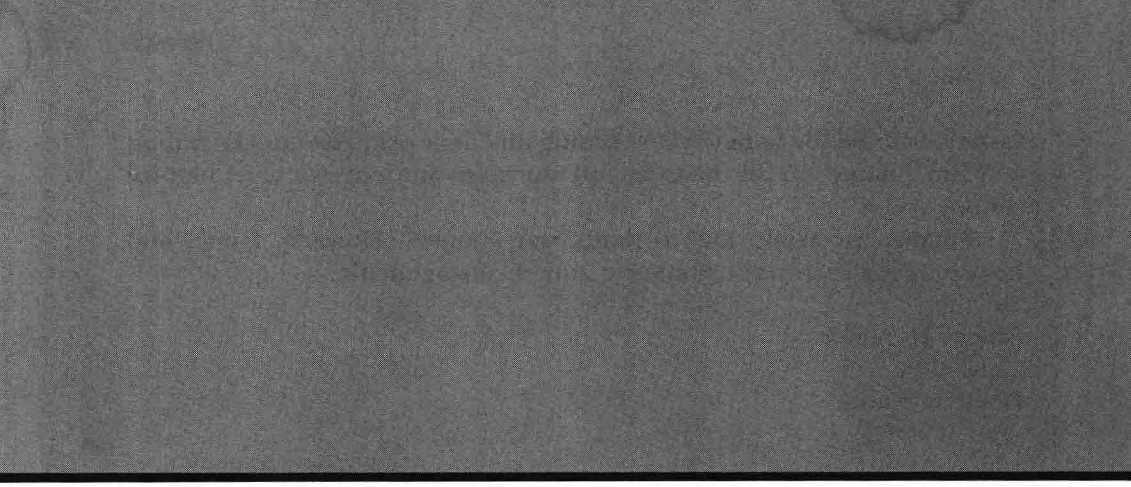
Cheryl Hamilton
Cordell Parker
Doyle D. Smith

CHAPTER 1

COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS



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> **It has been demonstrated throughout human history that most individuals can achieve more of their goals or achieve them faster, easier, more completely, or more efficiently through organizations.[1]**
>
> **Herbert G. Hicks**
> ***The Management of Organizations: A System and Human Resources Approach***

In the past, the functioning of business and professional organizations was essentially taken for granted. However, since the rate of increase in U.S. productivity has been steadily declining, the problem of organizational efficiency is today receiving renewed interest. The question frequently asked is "How can our organizations become more productive?" Since American industry is so diverse, economic experts are struggling to come up with workable suggestions. One suggestion for improving productivity, however, has always received approval—increased output per worker. In other words, if organizations could just persuade employees (managers as well as subordinates) to increase their daily output, the productivity of the organization would improve.

Research in business shows that individual productivity is affected by the climate of the organization, the managing abilities of supervisory personnel, and the job satisfaction of subordinates. Since good communication directly affects all three of these categories, this book will focus on improving the communication skills of both employees and supervisory personnel and suggest ways these people can favorably influence the climate of their organization.

COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: SOME DEFINITIONS

Business and professional communication refers to all oral and written exchanges of ideas and information between persons directly or indirectly involved in the organizational setting. (See Chapter 2 for a thorough explanation of the communication process.)

The following are examples of the types of communication included in this definition:

1. **Person-to-person interactions:**
    - **a.** Employee-to-employee
    - **b.** Employee-to-customer
    - **c.** Manager-to-employee
    - **d.** Employee-to-manager
2. **Interviews:**
    - **a.** Employment interviews
    - **b.** Performance appraisals
    - **c.** Client conferences
3. **Group experiences:**
    - **a.** Sales meetings

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