

BUSINESS Communication



IN A CHANGING WORLD

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Business Communication in a Changing World

Preface

When confronted with taking a business communication course, students may not realize the immense value of possessing communication competencies. They may ask such questions as these: Isn't knowing the theories and concepts of the field of business all I need to succeed in the corporate setting? Is communication really important for a career in business?

Knowing the theories and concepts of the field of commerce is important, but communication skills will probably be the basis for a businessperson's success or failure. A recent study, for example, indicates that the two most important factors in current business hiring decisions are attitude and communication skills.¹ Other investigations suggest that specific skills needed to be successful in the corporate world include an understanding of and skills in decision making, intrapersonal communication, listening, interpersonal communication, interviewing, group communication, public speaking, and business writing.²

The topics in *Business Communication in a Changing World* have been arranged so that students first learn about the field of communication and the role of communication in business settings. The foundational understandings are further examined by investigating ethical communication, listening, and verbal and nonverbal signal systems. The learner as a personal and other-centered communicator in interactions, interviews, and meetings is then explored. Investigating the communicator as a public speaker and a writer completes the study. During this analysis such factors as the roles of culture, gender, and the changing nature of today's business organization are central to the discussion.

Business Communication in a Changing World is intended for use in business communication courses. The approach, the language, the examples, the format, and the emphasis on oral communication with the inclusion of written communication attempt to address what it takes to become a successful business communicator. Each area is grounded in the research base of the field. Because chapters are not interlinking, they can be used in an order that parallels the philosophy of the instructor.

We have tried to portray the most accurate and meaningful picture of the world of work by making the coverage practical. Features have been incorporated that should make learning both interesting and relevant. We have included an abundance of real business examples and references, factual scenarios from the world of work, interviews with professionals on a range of job-related topics, actual world simulations to be used to apply the strategies presented, and experiential activities to allow for practice of the skills and knowledge being acquired.

The world of business is ever changing. The altering demographics of the United States, the extension of business into a global market, the shift of the Northern American business from manufacturing to service . . . all of these factors have been confronted. Attention is given to such diverse topics as culture, harassment, conflict resolution, dealing with difficult people, the role of self concept, gender communication, and dealing with communication anxiety.

We hope that *Business Communication in a Changing World* assists the reader in becoming a successful businessperson—successful because she or he is an effective communicator.

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1. David Binko, "Technology in the Classroom," an oral comment made during a workshop given at Prince George's Community College, August 25, 1995, as transcribed by Marlene Cohen.
2. William Brock, *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, June 1991), p. 15. Also see Isa Engleberg and Diana Wynn, "DACUM: A National Data Base Justifying the Study of Speech Communication," *Journal of the Association for Communication Administrators*, January 1995. Etiquette 361

Brief Contents

Contents vii

Preface xvii

Chapter 1	The Business of Communication	1
Chapter 2	Communication Ethics in Business Settings	31
Chapter 3	Verbal Communication	54
Chapter 4	Nonverbal Communication	76
Chapter 5	Listening	111
Chapter 6	Managing Self-Communication	131
Chapter 7	Managing Communication with Others	153
Chapter 8	Interviewing	190
Chapter 9	Group Communication: Characteristics of Business Groups	231
Chapter 10	Group Communication: Participating in Business Groups	266
Chapter 11	Public Speaking: The Purposes and Types of Business Speeches	291
Chapter 12	Public Speaking: Preparing the Business Speech	307
Chapter 13	Public Speaking: Presenting the Business Speech	333
Chapter 14	Written Business Communication	344
Glossary		367
Index		387
Meet the Authors		395

Contents

Preface xvii

Chapter 1 The Business of Communication 1

VIGNETTE 1

THE CHANGING NATURE OF TODAY'S BUSINESS ORGANIZATION 2

COMMUNICATION IN TODAY'S CHANGING BUSINESS ORGANIZATION 6

THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION 8

 Components of the Communication System 8

 Communication Models 8

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION VARIABLES 12

 Organizational Culture 12 Organizational Climate 12

 Organizational Channels 13 Organizational Networks 16

 Organizational Functions 18

IMPROVING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION 19

 Planned Business Communication 19 Prepared Business

 Communication 20 Responsive Business Communication 21

 Appropriate Business Communication 22 Coordinated Business

 Communication 24 Quality Business Communication 25

IN SUMMARY 26

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE 26

DIVERSITY SIMULATION 26

NOTES 27

Chapter 2 Communication Ethics in Business Settings 31

VIGNETTE 31

THE ETHICAL DILEMMA 32

ETHICS AND BUSINESS 32

ETHICS DEFINED 33

BUSINESS ETHICS DEFINED	34
ETHICAL PRACTICES IN BUSINESS	35
Capitalism and Ethics	36
Corporate Responsibility	36
Changes in Ethical Awareness	36
FEATURE INTERVIEW: Joyce Hauser	39
USING ETHICS	39
USING ETHICS IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION	43
SAMPLE SPEECH: "Principles for Managing in a Time of Change: A CEO's Perspective"	44
IN SUMMARY	51
BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE	51
SIMULATIONS	51
NOTES	52

Chapter 3 Verbal Communication 54

VIGNETTE 54

LANGUAGE DEFINED	55
DIALECTS	56
Standard American English	57
Nonstandard Dialects	58
PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE MEANING	60
LANGUAGE PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATING	61
Assumption	61
Clarity	62
Concreteness	63
Fact versus Inference	64
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WRITTEN AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE	65
FEMALE-MALE LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION	66
The Sexism of Standard American English	66
Male and Female Language Usage	67
FEATURE INTERVIEW: Deborah Borisoff	69
INTERCULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE USAGE	71
IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE USAGE AND BUSINESS	72
IN SUMMARY	73
BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE	73
NOTES	74

Chapter 4 Nonverbal Communication 76

VIGNETTE 76

SOURCES OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION	78
IMPORTANCE OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS	79
VERBAL-NONVERBAL RELATIONSHIPS	80
Substituting Relationship of Nonverbal to Verbal	80
Complementing Relationship of Nonverbal to Verbal	80
Regulating Relationship of Nonverbal to Verbal	80
Conflicting Relationship of Nonverbal to Verbal	80
READING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION	81
CATEGORIES OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION	81
Kinesics	82
FEATURE INTERVIEW: Richard Urban	87
Vocal Cues	88
Proxemics	89
Physical Characteristics	92
Artifacts	93
Aesthetics	96
Chronemics	99
CULTURE AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION	100
Greetings	102
Conversations	102
Gestures	103
Time	104
Business Settings	104
DEALING WITH NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION	105
IN SUMMARY	107
BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE	107
NOTES	108

Chapter 5 Listening 111

VIGNETTE 111

LISTENING IN THE BUSINESS ORGANIZATION	112
Levels of Organizational Listening	112
The Organizational Listening Environment	113
Listening and Business Success	114
FEATURE INTERVIEW: Sean Greenwood	115
THE LISTENING PROCESS	115
Motivation	116
Receiving	116
Attention	116

Perception	117	Interest	117	Interpretation	117
Responding	118	Storage	118	Feedback	118
THE GOALS OF LISTENING 119					
Listening for Discrimination	119	Listening for			
Comprehension	120	Listening for Therapeutic Value	120		
Listening for Critical Evaluation	120	Listening for			
Appreciation	122				
OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING 122					
Physiological Interference	122	Lack of Motivation	123		
Negative Self-Concept	123	Lack of Understanding	123		
Lack of Preparation	124				
IMPROVING LISTENING 125					
IN SUMMARY 128					
BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE 128					
NOTES 129					

Chapter 6 Managing Self-Communication 131

VIGNETTE 131

THE DIMENSIONS OF INTRAPERSONAL COMMUNICATION 132	
Psychological Dimension of Intrapersonal Communication	132
Physiological Dimension of Intrapersonal Communication	134
Cognitive Dimension of Intrapersonal Communication	140
Affective Dimension of Intrapersonal Communication	141
THE COMMUNICATOR SELF 143	
Self-Concept	144
FEATURE INTERVIEW: Linda Eaton 145	
Self-Identities	145
Self-Talk	146
IMPROVING INTRAPERSONAL COMMUNICATION 146	
IN SUMMARY 148	
BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE 149	
NOTES 151	

Chapter 7 Managing Communication with Others 153

VIGNETTE 153

SELF-DISCLOSURE 155

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE ORGANIZATION 156

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS IN THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT 158

Using the Telephone 158 Using Voice Mail Systems 160

MANAGEMENT-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS 161

Criticizing 163 Handling Grievances 164

Dealing with Difficult Personalities 165 Directing 167

Job Training 170

CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION 170

Conflict in the Work Environment 171 Conflict Resolution 172

SEXUAL HARASSMENT 180

Sexual Harassment Defined 181 Communicating about Sexual
Harassment 182

IN SUMMARY 183

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE 184

DIVERSITY SIMULATION 185, 186

NOTES 188

Chapter 8 Interviewing 190

VIGNETTE 190

STRUCTURING THE INTERVIEW 191

The Opening of an Interview 191 The Body of an Interview 193

The Closing of an Interview 195

TYPES OF INTERNAL BUSINESS INTERVIEWS 195

The Informative Interview 195 The Problem-Solving

Interview 197 The Counseling Interview 198

The Persuasive Interview 199 The Employment Interview 199

FEATURE INTERVIEW: Scott Brandt 217

The Performance Appraisal 218 The Reprimanding Interview 223

TYPES OF EXTERNAL BUSINESS INTERVIEWS 224

The Press Conference 224 The Talk Show Interview 225

IN SUMMARY 226

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE 226

DIVERSITY SIMULATION 227

NOTES 228

Chapter 9 Group Communication: Characteristics of Business Groups 231

VIGNETTE 231

GROUPS DEFINED 232

GROUP VERSUS INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS 233

Advantages of Groups 233 Disadvantages of Groups 233

TYPES OF GROUPS 234

Work Teams 235 Committees 236

Media-Conferences 236 Focus Groups 238

Public Meetings 238 Town Meetings 239

GROUP OPERATIONS 239

Group Norming 239 Group Storming 240

Group Conforming 243 Group Performing 243

Group Adjourning 245

MAKING GROUP DECISIONS 245

Formulating an Agenda 246 Voting 249

Decision Making 250

THE GROUP SETTING 255

Seating Choice 256 Table Configuration 256

The Effect of the Physical Environment 257

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GROUPS 257

Cultures and Groups 258 Cultural Attitudes toward Group

Procedures 258 Cultural Contrasts in Procedural Structure 259

Cultural Contrast of the Role of Information 260

MALE AND FEMALE ROLES IN GROUPS 261

IN SUMMARY 262

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE 262

NOTES 263

Chapter 10 Group Communication: Participating in Business Groups 266

VIGNETTE 266

THE PARTICIPANT 267

Responsibilities of Group Members 267 Communicating
as a Group Member 269

FEATURE INTERVIEW: Barbara G. Rosenthal 273

Roles of Group Members 274 Communication Networks 275
Dealing with Difficult Group Members 277

LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP 279

Types of Leaders 280 Patterns of Leader/Leadership
Emergence 282 Why People Desire to Be Leaders 283
Responsibilities of Leaders 284 The Leader as
Communicator 285 Effective Leadership Questioning 286

IN SUMMARY 287

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE 287

DIVERSITY SIMULATION 288

NOTES 290

Chapter 11 Public Speaking: The Purposes and Types of Business Speeches 291

VIGNETTE 291

PUBLIC SPEAKING DEFINED 292

INFORMATIVE SPEAKING IN BUSINESS 293

Types of Informative Speeches 293 Characteristics of
Informative Speeches 294

PERSUASIVE SPEAKING IN BUSINESS 295

Goals of Persuasive Speaking 296 Persuasive Strategies 296

FEATURE INTERVIEW: Robert Goldberg 299

SPECIAL OCCASION SPEECHES 300

Speech of Introduction 300 Speech of Welcome 300
Speech of Presentation 301 Speech of Acceptance 301

After-Dinner Speech	301	The Motivational Speech	302
The Sales Speech	302	Question-and-Answer Sessions	302

IN SUMMARY 305

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE 305

NOTES 306

Chapter 12 Public Speaking: Preparing the Business Speech 307

VIGNETTE 307

COMPONENTS OF ANALYSIS 308

Prior Analysis	309	Process Analysis	312
Post-Speech Analysis	313		

DEVELOPING THE SPEECH 313

Sources of Information	313	Supporting Material	315
Vehicles for Presenting Supporting Material	318		

STRUCTURING THE MESSAGE 321

The Introduction	321	The Central Idea	323
The Body	323	The Conclusion	325

SAMPLE SPEECHES 326

Sample Speech to Inform	326	Sample Speech to Persuade	328
-------------------------	-----	---------------------------	-----

IN SUMMARY 330

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE 330

NOTES 332

Chapter 13 Public Speaking: Presenting the Business Speech 333

VIGNETTE 333

MODES OF PRESENTATION 334

Impromptu Presentation	334	Extemporaneous Presentation	335
Manuscript Presentation	335	Memorized Presentation	335

THE PHYSICAL ELEMENTS OF A SPEECH 335

Physical Presentation	336	Oral Presentation	337
-----------------------	-----	-------------------	-----

PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY 339

IN SUMMARY 341

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE 342

NOTES 343

Chapter 14 Written Business Communication 344

VIGNETTE 344

THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS WRITING 345

THE WRITING PROCESS 346

FEATURE INTERVIEW: Penni E. Fromm 348

Preparing to Write the Document 349 Writing "Do's"
and "Don'ts" 350

ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS FOR COMMON DOCUMENTS 351

The Internal Memorandum 352 The External Letter 352

The Project Status Report 352 The Executive Summary 355

The Sales Proposal 355 The Resume and Cover Letter 355

The Minutes of a Meeting 357

THE ABC'S OF LANGUAGE 357

ENHANCING THE DOCUMENT'S IMAGE 359

Stationery 360 Layout and Format 360

ELECTRONIC MAIL AT THE WORKPLACE 360

Speed versus Accuracy 361 Privacy Concerns 361

Etiquette 361

ANALYZING THE WRITTEN DOCUMENT 363

IN SUMMARY 365

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE 366

NOTES 366

Glossary 367

Index 387

Meet the Authors 395

The Business of Communication

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand that communication in an organization is highly complex.
- Recognize how the changing nature of organizations impacts their communications.
- Be familiar with current initiatives of quality and re-engineering as they influence organizational communication.
- Be able to identify the linear, interactive, and transactional processes of communication.
- Know that an organization's communication is modified by its culture, climate, communication channels, and communicators—at the executive, managerial, supervisory, and employee levels.

When my lawyer called to say that the final approval had come through on my purchase of an existing fast food franchise, I was excited and nervous. I always wanted to run my own business. I soon realized, however, that with opportunities come challenges. The staff had been very comfortable with the previous owner, so they weren't particularly open to change. They tested my authority. The counter help started to wander in late. The assistant managers didn't seem to have much enthusiasm. Customers complained of waiting in long lines. I was overwhelmed. Ironically, while all this was going on, I received a questionnaire from my college's business school asking me to evaluate my education. I wrote only one comment on the form: "Why didn't you include courses in communication in my degree program? All my problems right now are communication problems, and I'm not equipped to handle them!"