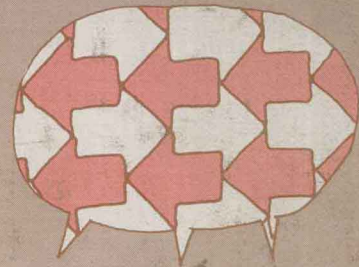
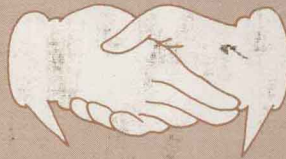


UNDERSTANDING AND USING COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS

JOEL P. BOWMAN & BERNADINE P. BRANCHAW



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Drs. Joel P. Bowman and Bernadine P. Branchaw combined their professional experience and expertise in the area of effective communication to write *Understanding and Using Communication in Business*. Their ability to demonstrate the interrelationship of topics create this unique and comprehensive examination of communication skills and techniques. Because Bowman and Branchaw are concerned with how to communicate effectively, they think students should know practical aspects of all major communication systems, including written, oral, nonverbal messages or a combination of these.

Dr. Joel P. Bowman is Assistant Professor in the Department of Business Education and Administrative Services at Western Michigan University. His more than ten years of experience in developing and teaching introductory and advanced business communication courses and his work as consultant for leaders in business, industry, and government give him a professional base and understanding of the application of effective communication. He contributes regularly to professional journals and was Review Editor for *The Journal of Business Communication* the summer of 1975. As a lecturer he has brought the best aspects of the traditional and modern styles of communication to national, regional, and state conventions. Bowman is a member of American Business Communication Association, Phi Kappa Phi, Pi Omega Pi, and National Business Education Association.

Dr. Bernadine Branchaw worked five years as a secretary in Illinois and has fifteen years teaching experience in high schools, junior college, and universities in Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan. She is at present Assistant Professor in the Department of Business Education and Administrative Services at Western Michigan University.

Dr. Branchaw keeps abreast of developments in areas of communication as she lectures to business, industry, and government agencies. She proctors the Certified Secretary Examinations, chairs annual secretarial seminars sponsored by her department and writes articles for business educational journals. She is listed in *Leaders in Education*, *The World's Who's Who of Women*, and is active in National Business Education Association, Michigan Business Education Association, American Business Communication Association, and Delta Pi Epsilon. As a teacher she focuses on practical application of communication skills. Her awareness and access to problems and solutions in the area of business communication make her contribution invaluable.

In addition to their separate accomplishments, Drs. Bowman and Branchaw team teach secretarial and communication seminars for business, industry, school districts, and government agencies. The informal sense of teamwork that they have developed is evident in *Understanding and Using Communication in Business*. The knowledge of communication problems and solutions gleaned from these seminars is also evident in these pages. The combination of their skills is unusually effective.

Through the contribution of these two authors, *Understanding and Using Communication in Business* offers a total picture of the communication process: writing skills, letters, reports, writing problems (grammar, vocabulary, logic) organizational communication and presentations for small groups or formal meetings. Bowman and Branchaw are currently hard at work in their next book for Canfield Press on business letters.

PREFACE

Our goal in writing *Understanding and Using Communication in Business* was to present between the covers of one book as much information as we could about why and how certain messages communicate and other messages don't. We have tried to do so in a way that combines the advantages of the numerous "practical" communication texts with the advantages of the also numerous communication theory books.

Our own teaching experience and the results of a nationwide survey of business communication teachers conducted by Canfield Press indicated that this is the kind of book that can best meet the needs of business communication students — both in and out of college.

Because we believe that it is more important for most students to understand general theoretical principles than it is for them to know the results of field and laboratory studies that support the principles, our focus is on the practical use of principles. We have deliberately avoided the so-called "cookbook" approach to business communication. Because no two business problems will ever call for exactly the same solution, we believe that students of business communication need to understand enough of the theory behind communication principles to be able to adapt specific skills to a variety of situations without having to look up a "recipe" for a particular message type.

From Chapter One to Chapter Twelve, you will — we think — find this book readable, instructive, and useful. Each chapter begins with specific, measurable objectives. Each chapter concludes with questions and exercises which will enable your students to test themselves to see how much of the material has been mastered. The problems and exercises are relevant to the needs of the person in business and are the practical kinds of examples to which students can respond.

In Chapter One, "The Nature of Communication," we present the general principles and purposes of communication and relate these principles and purposes to specific methods of application.

In Chapters Two, Three, and Four, we discuss written communication, including basic skills, letters, and reports. In Chapter Five we present some simple techniques to help improve reading and listening skills. In Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight, we discuss the basic principles involved in face-to-face communication situations, including nonverbal and oral techniques of communicating and the psychological principles of formal and informal interpersonal relationships. In Chapter Nine we discuss communication behavior in small groups, and in Chapter Ten we discuss formal presentations.

Chapter Eleven, "Organizational Communication," shows how the information we've presented in the first ten chapters is combined to coordinate activity in organizational life.

Chapter Twelve, "The Job Search," shows the student how to use what you've learned about communication to find and obtain the job of their choice.

Understanding and Using Communication in Business can be used alone in courses that cover business communication in one semester or quarter, or it can be used in combination with one or more books treating a specific topic in depth. The forthcoming satellite publications for the Canfield Press business communication core/satellite series are designed to meet the need for special area emphasis, and the series will provide current and complete information in paperback form to supplement each of the twelve topics covered in this text.

We have avoided footnoting, but the suggested readings listed at the end of each chapter will help students pursue the specific details and the results of communication studies which may be of interest. To make it easy to find and use other materials, we've deliberately selected readily available books.

Although we have restricted documentation to the lists of suggested readings, we have not written this book in a vacuum. We have learned a great deal from the field and laboratory studies of others, and we have benefited from the writings of and conversations with many business communication authorities. We owe special thanks to Francis W. Weeks of the University of Illinois, C. W. Wilkinson of the University of Alabama, and many others in the American Business Communication Association. We also appreciate the advice and assistance given by James E. Freel, Cynthia A. Newell, and Thomas Dorsaneo of Canfield Press and Lucian Spataro of Ohio University. We also thank Mary Ann Bowman for her careful proofreading of the manuscript.

Good reading.

Joel P. Bowman
Bernadine P. Branchaw

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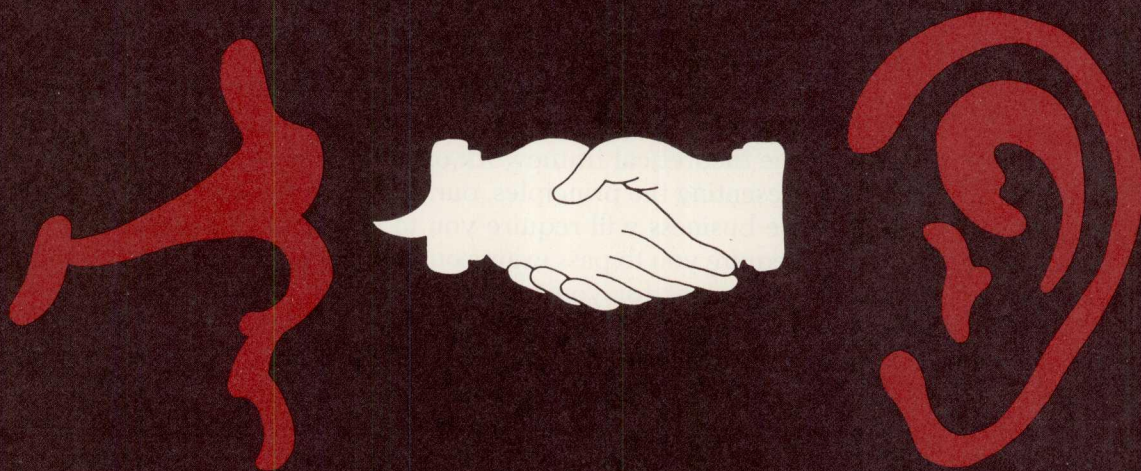
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1

THE NATURE OF
COMMUNICATION



After you have read this chapter, you should be able to

1. Define communication.
2. List eight communication variables.
3. Use models to illustrate the communication process.
4. List and explain barriers to communication.
5. Explain how communication systems help organizations to achieve definite objectives.

Purposes:
Principles
Practice
Problem Solving

THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATION

This book is designed to help you understand communication principles and to show you how to use these principles effectively. Our goal for you is primarily practical: we want you to become a successful communicator. Most of this book deals with the practical uses of communication to solve typical interpersonal and business problems.

This first chapter, however, is theoretical. Because we want you to understand the *why* as well as the *how* of communication, we shall first present the theoretical framework of communication. But even when we are presenting the principles, our approach and goals are practical.

Because business will require you to communicate effectively but will not require you to pass exams on communication theory, we think it more important for you to know the principles that govern communication than it is for you to learn the results of specific studies. In this book, we are more concerned with *how* than with *why*. At the end of each chapter we provide a short bibliography that will enable you to find out more about the studies that support the theory if you desire. We hope that you will become sufficiently interested that you will want to read more than this one book, but we will have accomplished our purpose if reading this book makes you an effective communicator. We think it will.

In addition to defining and explaining the communication process, in this first chapter we present communication theory, relate it to communication and organizational objectives, define communication

effectiveness, and identify the major communication systems in business organizations.

Although we will concentrate on how communication functions in business, most of what we say applies just as well to other kinds of communication. Business communication differs from all other forms of communication primarily in the environment in which it takes place. Much, but not all, business communication has a specific, practical purpose; that element isn't always present in other communication situations. But as a rule, what works well with your business associates will also work well with your family, friends, and others with whom you communicate.

Whether you recognize it or not, you have no choice but to communicate. If you try to avoid communicating by not replying to messages, you send a message anyway. When you don't say yes, you say no by default. The only choice you can make about communication is whether you are going to attempt to communicate effectively.

Language, like any other tool, can either be used or misused. You can use it to pursue ethical or unethical goals. Unprincipled or misguided persons can use communication to mislead others — just as Hitler used his skills as an orator to convince Germans that they were destined to rule the world. Once you've learned effective communication techniques, however, you will be able to prevent misunderstandings between people because you will know how to send clear messages and to interpret correctly the messages you receive. You will also learn how to avoid being manipulated — hustled — by someone who would mislead you. And, by knowing when someone is trying to manipulate you, you will be in a position to help prevent the manipulation of others.

COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS AND PROCESS

Importance of
Communication

In the past 20 years or so, the business community has become increasingly aware that many of its problems are directly related to communication. The need for improved communication skills is evidenced by the demand for professional seminars on communication, the increasing number of "communication" jobs in business and industry, and the increasing number of colleges across the country with required communication courses.

Communication
Can Be a
Problem

What is it about communication that makes it a problem? Communication is such a standard, common occurrence in our lives that we tend to take it for granted. We talk to people; they answer. We write

letters; we receive replies. We read books, take tests, and write papers. Almost everything we do requires some kind of communication activity. Information is going in and out all the time. (Some of it even makes sense!)

As is the case with other “automatic” activities such as walking, we communicate so much that most of us consider ourselves experts. When we don’t understand or cannot make ourselves understood, we usually blame the other person. Most of the time, however, we are understood — or at least we think we are. And usually we are able to understand the other person — or at least we think we do. So it’s only natural for us to consider ourselves experts. Most of the time we use communication fairly well. We’re polite and friendly. We get along well with most of the people we know.

Communication Is Essential

Communication is essential for all human relations; it makes civilized, cooperative life possible. Our ability to build and shape our environment depends on our communication skills. To a certain degree, communication skills distinguish human beings from other animals. Without communication skills, we would have only the physical power of our individual bodies to control our environment. Without communication skills, our ancestors would have been no match for the many animals that were faster, stronger, and larger than they were. They undoubtedly communicated to survive.

We also communicate to make our lives better. We use communication skills to try to make our lives what we wish them to be. Building a city requires more communication than concrete. That civilization exists is testimony to our combined communication skills.

Unfortunately, the problems of civilization are also testimony to our skills as communicators. Even with those we know and love best, we have misunderstandings. With those we neither know nor like very much, communication is frequently difficult and sometimes impossible.

Communication Is Deceptive

Communication is deceptive. On the surface it seems easy to understand and achieve by using common sense. And much of our current knowledge about communication is based on a common-sense approach to communication problems. Often, however, common sense is not enough. Skilled communicators draw on an extensive and complex body of knowledge, including not only semantics — the study of language — but also aspects of psychology, sociology, and the graphic arts.

Because communication seems so simple, we tend to forget that it is a process involving a number of complex variables, and that for each of these variables, a number of things can go wrong.

COMMUNICATION VARIABLES

What Is
Communication?

What is communication? We can begin with a simple definition. Communication can be broadly defined as the transmission of a message. Because this book is about human communication, we'll limit our discussion to the transmission of messages from one person to another — but we recognize that other animals, and perhaps even plants, are also capable of certain kinds of communication.

Communication
Variables

Although some writers discuss what they call “internal” or “intrapersonal” communication (a mental talking to yourself), it is generally more useful to limit the term communication to the transfer of meaning between and among people. Communication begins with a perception in the mind of a sender. This perception is the impetus for a message for which the sender selects a channel that will convey the message to a receiver. The goal of this process is the transfer of meaning. Several factors influence the communication process:

1. Perception
2. Sender
3. Message
4. Channel
5. Audience (Receiver)
6. Transfer of meaning
7. Feedback
8. Noise

Perception

What Is
Perception?

The first factor in the process, perception, is responsible for all of the others. To paraphrase René Descartes, we know that we exist because we perceive. Perception is the act of using the senses to become aware of the environment. Although we all live in the same *objective* world, each of us has a different *subjective* view of the world. We see the world with different eyes. No matter how similar two people may be, no two of us are exactly alike, and so each of us perceives the world and events differently.

Communication
Is an Effort
to Be More
Comfortable

Human perception is a complicated subject, and we have space to deal with only a small part of it. Our perceptions begin in a simple way, however. Infants perceive themselves as either comfortable or uncomfortable. When they are uncomfortable, they communicate. The survival of the infant depends on the success of that communication.

At first, infants do not perceive themselves as separate beings. When they finally do perceive that they are separate from their mothers and

the rest of their environment, the complexity of perception — and of the communication process — greatly increases.

In addition to expressing the relatively flat emotions of comfort and discomfort, infants begin to express gratitude, fear, anger, and even rage. Infants wish to control their mothers to ensure continued gratification of their needs; infants want their mothers to perceive the world of their needs with the full intensity with which they perceive it. The infant insists: “My hunger is your hunger; my pain is your pain.”

As we grow older, we cease to expect such a total sharing; but because humanity’s survival has for so long depended on making others share our perceptions, the mental health of each of us depends on our ability to share our perceptions with others. If it were not for our different perceptions, we would not have the need to communicate.

Sender

Who Is the
Sender?

Another important factor in the communication process is the sender. The sender is responsible for formulating a message that will convey the meaning the perception has created. This book attempts to help you improve your communication skills by showing how you, as a sender of messages, can control the communication process by the way you present yourself and your message.

Credibility

As a message source, you must be concerned with your believability or credibility. Your credibility and that of your messages greatly influence the kind of reception your messages will receive. Your credibility will depend on how well you convey trustworthiness and professional competence, but you can’t convey these qualities by skilled communication alone — you’ll have to earn them.

Message

Messages Are
Symbolic

The third major factor in the communication process, messages, is *what* we communicate. Messages consist of verbal or nonverbal symbols containing information, meaning, or intelligence. Each message is an attempt to define and share with our intended receiver some aspect of our perception of the world — what we see, hear, feel, taste, smell, or think — and what that perception means to us.

Of course messages can vary greatly in complexity from the infant’s cry announcing discomfort to the complicated language of détente. When people’s perceptions are similar, simple messages serve; as per-