

FOURTH EDITION

*Guide to*  
MANAGERIAL  
COMMUNICATION

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*Effective Business  
Writing and Speaking*

MARY MUNTER

Guide to

# Managerial Communication

**Effective Business Writing and Speaking**

**Fourth Edition**

*by Mary Munter*  
Amos Tuck School of Business  
Dartmouth College



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**For Lorlee, Julz, and the Admiral**

# *Introduction*

## **HOW THIS BOOK CAN HELP YOU**

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If you are facing a specific managerial communication problem, turn to the relevant part of this book for guidance. For example:

- You're speaking or writing to a new group of people. How can you enhance your credibility? How can you appeal to them?
- You can't get started on a writing project. How can you overcome writer's block?
- The thought of giving that presentation next week is making you nervous. What can you do to relax?
- In making your case, you don't know whether to start with your recommendation or to build up to it. Which is more persuasive?
- Your new computer programs can create terrific visual aids and writing formats. How can you get the most out of them?
- Your boss is returning your memos and reports to you to rewrite. How can you organize your ideas? How can you express yourself more succinctly?
- You're wasting time at meetings. How can you get more accomplished?

If you don't have a specific question, but need general guidelines, procedures, and techniques, read through this entire book. For example:

- You would like a framework for thinking strategically about all managerial communication.
- You would like to know more about the process of writing and editing more efficiently.

- You would like a step-by-step procedure for preparing an oral presentation.

If you are taking a professional training course, a college course, a workshop, or a seminar, use this book as a reference.

- You may very well be a good communicator already. You would like, however, to polish and refine your managerial writing and speaking skills by taking a course or seminar.

## **WHO CAN USE THIS BOOK**

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This book is written for you if you need to speak or write in a managerial, business, government, or professional context—that is, if you need to achieve results with and through other people. You probably already know these facts:

- *You spend most of your time at work communicating.* Various studies show that 50 to 90 percent of work time is spent in some communication task.
- *Your success is based on communication.* Other studies verify that your career advancement is correlated with your ability to communicate well.
- *Communication is increasingly important today.* Recent trends, such as increased globalization, technology, and specialization make persuasive communication more crucial than ever.

## **WHY THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN**

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The thousands of participants in various business and professional speaking and writing courses I have taught want a brief summary of communication techniques. Many busy professionals have found other books on communication skills too long, insultingly remedial, or full of irrelevant information.

This book is appropriate for you if you want a guide that is short, professional, and readable.

- *Short.* The book summarizes results and models culled from thousands of pages of text and research. I have omitted bulky examples, cases, footnotes, and exercises.
- *Professional.* This book includes only information that professionals will find useful. You will not find instructions for study skills, such as in-class writing and testing; secretarial skills, such as typing letters and answering telephones; artistic skills, such as writing dialogue and performing dramatic readings; or job-seeking skills, such as résumé writing and job interviewing.
- *Readable.* I have tried to make the book clear and practical. The format makes it easy to read and to skim. The tone is direct, matter-of-fact, and nontheoretical.

## HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

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The book is divided into four main sections.

### **Communication strategy (Chapter I)**

Effective managerial communication—written or oral—is based on an effective strategy. Therefore, you should analyze the five strategic variables covered in this chapter before you start to write or speak: (1) communicator strategy (objectives, style, and credibility); (2) audience strategy (who they are, what they know, what they feel, how you can motivate them); (3) message strategy (how to emphasize and organize); (4) channel choice strategy (when to write and when to speak); and (5) culture strategy (how cultural differences affect your strategy).

### **Writing (Chapters II, III, IV, and appendices)**

Chapter II offers techniques on the writing process, how to write more efficiently. Chapter III deals with “macro,” or larger, issues in writing—including document design, coherence and emphasis, and paragraphs. Chapter IV covers “micro,” or smaller, writing issues—including editing for brevity and choosing a style. The appendices cover writing formats, wording, grammar, and punctuation.

## **Speaking (Chapters V, VI, and VII)**

The speaking section discusses three aspects of business speaking. Chapter V explains the verbal aspects, or what you say, in presentations, question-and-answer sessions, meetings, group collaborations, and other speaking situations. Chapter VI describes visual aids, both those prepared in advanced and those generated during the discussion. Chapter VII analyzes nonverbal delivery and listening skills.

## **Reference**

The last section of the book contains appendices that deal with formats, correct words, unbiased language, grammar, and punctuation. Finally, the bibliography lists my sources. See the bibliography if you want documentation or further information about any ideas throughout the book.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I offer grateful acknowledgment to the many people who helped make this book possible. First of all, my collegial family and my family of colleagues helped with ideas and revisions: Phil Anderson, Paul Argenti, Leonard and Helen-Jeanne Munter, Penny Paquette, Lindsay Rahmun, Lynn Russell, Debbie Schumann, and JoAnne Yates. Over the past twenty years, I have been privileged to work with excellent colleagues, executives, and students. My thanks to colleagues from the Managerial Communication Association and the Association for Business Communication for their research, energy, and stimulation. Thanks also to the thousands of executives from over eighty companies for their “real-world” experience and insights. I can scarcely believe that I have now taught literally thousands of students—at Dartmouth’s Amos Tuck School of Business, Stanford Graduate School of Business, the International University of Japan, and the Helsinki School of Economics. To them, I offer my thanks for their challenges and ideas. Finally, I would like to point out that the bibliography on pages 191-194 lists my sources in more detail.

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**Guide to  
MANAGERIAL  
COMMUNICATION**

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# CHAPTER I OUTLINE

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- I. Communicator strategy
  - 1. What are your objectives?
  - 2. What communication style do you choose?
  - 3. What is your credibility?
- II. Audience strategy
  - 1. Who are they?
  - 2. What do they know?
  - 3. What do they feel?
  - 4. How can you motivate them?
- III. Message strategy
  - 1. How can you emphasize?
  - 2. How can you organize a strategic message?
- IV. Channel choice strategy
- V. Culture strategy

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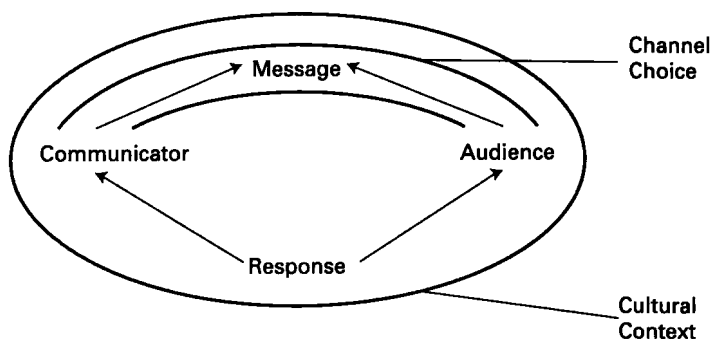
# CHAPTER I

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## *Communication Strategy*

**M**anagerial communication is different from other kinds of communication. Why? Because in a business or management setting, a brilliant message alone is not sufficient: you are successful only if your message leads to the response you desire from your audience. Therefore, instead of visualizing communication as a straight line from a sender to a receiver, think of communication as a circle, as shown below, with the audience's response as one of the critical elements.

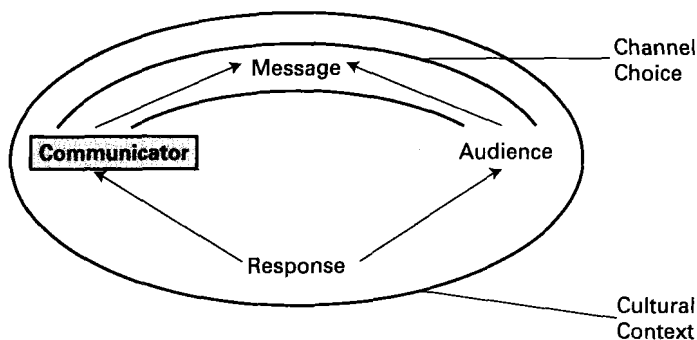
To get that desired audience response, you need to think strategically about your communication—before you start to write or speak. Strategic communication is based on five components, which you can analyze in any order: communicator (the writer or speaker) strategy, audience strategy, message strategy, channel choice strategy, and cultural context strategy.



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## I. COMMUNICATOR STRATEGY

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You, the communicator (writer or speaker), are clearly one of the elements in your communication strategy. This section explains how to communicate more purposefully, appropriately, and believably.

### I. What are your objectives?

Defining your objectives provides two important benefits. First, you will be more efficient, because you will no longer waste time writing or presenting material unless you have a clear reason for doing so. Second, you will be more effective, because formulating your objective precisely will help you communicate more clearly. To clarify your purpose, hone your objectives from the general to the specific.

**General objectives** These are your broad goals, the ones that trigger the creative process and start you thinking. They are comprehensive statements about what you hope to accomplish.

**Action objectives** To define your objectives more specifically, determine your action objectives—specific, measurable, time-bound steps that will lead toward your general objectives. State your action objectives in this form: “To accomplish a specific result by a specific time.”

**Communication objective** Your communication objective is even more specific. Based on your action objectives, decide precisely how you hope your audience will respond to your written or oral communication. To define your communication objective, complete this statement: “As a result of this communication, my audience will...”



<b>EXAMPLES OF OBJECTIVES</b>		
<b>General</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Communication</b>
Communicate departmental results.	Report X times per X time period.	As a result of this presentation, my boss will learn what my department accomplished this month.
Increase customer base.	Contract with X number of clients per X time period.	As a result of this letter, the client will sign the contract.
Develop a sound financial position.	Maintain annual debt-to-equity ratio of no greater than X.	As a result of this e-mail, the accountant will give me the pertinent information for my report.  As a result of this report, the board will approve my recommendations.
Increase the number of women hired.	Hire X number by X date.	As a result of this meeting, we will come up with a strategy to accomplish our goal.  As a result of this presentation, at least X number of women will sign up to interview with my firm.
Maintain market share.	See X amount by X date.	As a result of this memo, my boss will approve my marketing plan.  As a result of this presentation, the sales representatives will understand our product enhancements.