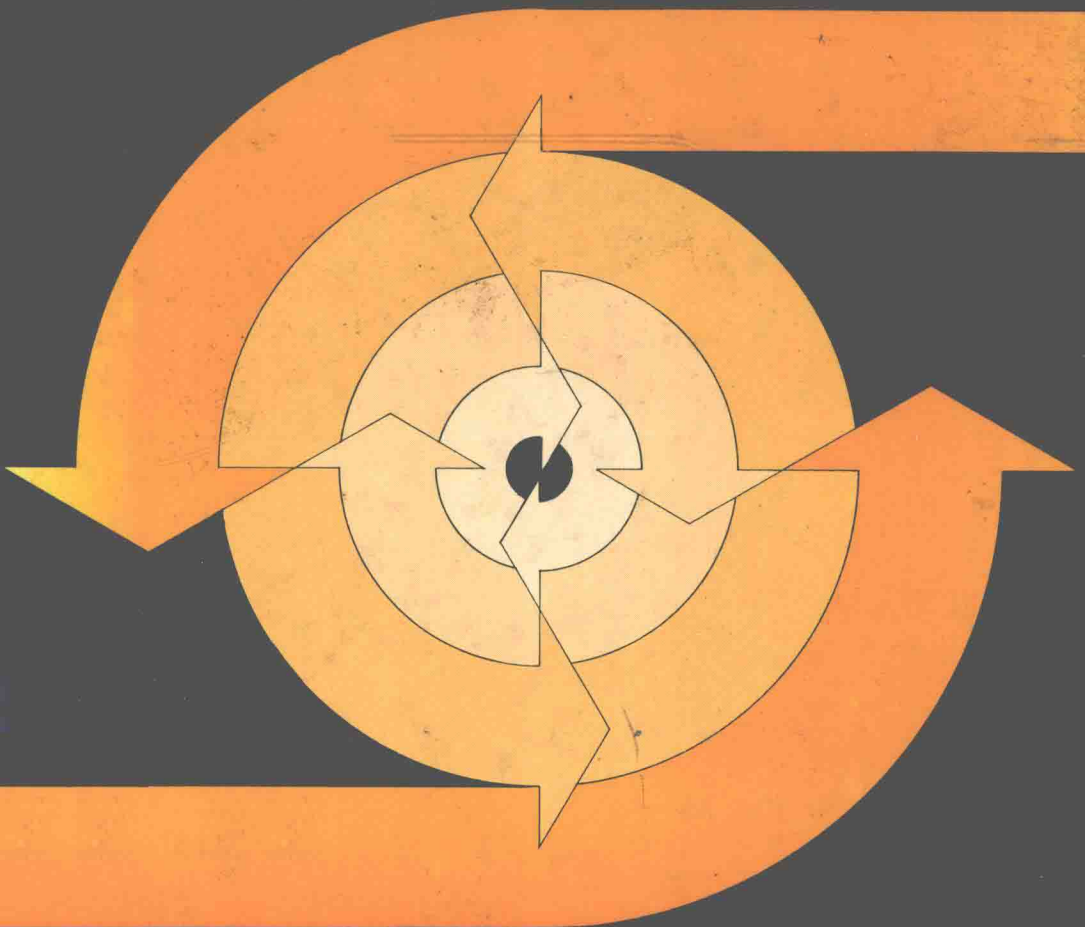


ERNEST G. BORMANN/WILLIAM S. HOWELL  
RALPH G. NICHOLS/GEORGE L. SHAPIRO

# *Interpersonal Communication in the Modern Organization*



*Interpersonal  
Communication  
in the  
Modern Organization*

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**Second Edition**

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## Preface

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The first edition of *Interpersonal Communication in the Modern Organization* was aimed at people who were already actively involved in organizations. In the preface to that edition we explained that "The book is intended for individuals and groups involved in the gamut of organizational activities. It is designed to supply theory and techniques to aid in solving the problems of interpersonal communication that crop up in the context of the modern organization. It deals with both verbal and nonverbal elements of human interaction."

The revised edition continues the emphasis on supplying theory and techniques to foster better communication skills within the organizational context, but the material has been adapted to the requirements of instructors teaching courses in organizational communication in community and four-year colleges. The book seeks to meet the career needs of students who are in vocational and technical training courses and programs which lead to positions within organizations.

The major focus of the treatment is upon the student as a person who is or will be actively "involved in the gamut" of organizational communication.

Each chapter is divided into two parts. The first section deals with a concrete classroom assignment and contains basic advice on how to develop specific skills related to the laboratory application. The material in these laboratory application sections is essentially new in the second edition. The second section develops the theory to support the laboratory application.

The book leads the student in logical fashion through the communication system of the organization as a participant, beginning with joining the organization and then going on to learning to communicate as a subordinate and learning to communicate as a manager.

We have based this revision on the latest findings of research in

organizational communication and on the latest developments in teaching applied courses for undergraduates. The book is divided into three parts. Part One deals with joining the organization and presents the basics of making a job application, preparing a resume, and participating in a job interview. It also discusses the use of informal conversation in learning about human relationships and the formal and informal communication channels and networks. The first part also presents the basics of the communication process and participating in the social and work groups of an organization. Part One ends with a chapter reporting the latest findings on research in communication and organizational culture.

Part Two consists of three chapters related to "Learning to Communicate as a Subordinate." The chapters discuss communication networks and flow, listening, and the evaluation interview.

Part Three discusses "Learning to Communicate as a Manager" and deals with nonverbal communication, leading group meetings, making organizational presentations, persuasion, theories of management, and developing and sustaining a productive and satisfying communication climate.

The book's organization moves from simpler concepts as the newcomers get acquainted with the communication practices of an organization through the more complicated communicative needs of upper management. Our organizing principle in deciding which skills to include in the section for subordinates and which in the part for managers has been the move from the more basic to the more advanced. Of course both subordinates and managers need similar communication skills and knowledge. Our point in dealing with listening in the section on communicating as a subordinate is not that listening is unimportant for managers, but that it is particularly important for subordinates and that the student who has studied listening early in the term will have that background when moving on to study managerial communication. In some instances we have dealt with similar communication contexts from both perspectives. For example, in Part Two we deal with the basics of participating in organizational group meetings and in Part Three we deal with leadership communication as it relates to managing small groups.

We wish to express our appreciation to the following persons who reviewed the manuscript of the revised edition and offered valuable suggestions: Professors Eldon Baker, University of Montana; William Donohue, Michigan State University; Clarence Edney, Florida State University; James Lahiff, University of Georgia; Ben Morse, University of Miami; Patricia Smith-Pierce, William Rainey Harper College; Debra A. Strugar, University of Arizona; Robert K. White, Black Hawk College; and Alan Zaremba, State University of New York at Fredonia.

The case study of the new breakfast cereal in Chapter 12 was modified and adapted from William S. Howell and Ernest G. Bormann, *Presentational Speaking for Business and the Professions* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pages 3-7.

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# 1

## *Getting a Job*

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### Laboratory Application

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#### THE JOB INTERVIEW

People have been talking their way into and out of good jobs forever. Vice-presidents have fired sons and presidents have groomed daughters to take over business empires, but for most of us nowadays, the way into a good position is through some sort of job interview.

Much of this book will be concerned with the communication situations involved with successfully engaging in organizational interactions, even including those skills necessary for gracefully terminating one's association with a company, but first you have to be hired.

Many of us spend a large part of our waking hours at work in order to earn a living. Sometimes we take a job in a haphazard, almost accidental way because we hear of an opening or because someone we know suggests we apply for a position. Why would someone follow the path of least resistance and slip into paths that might lead to dissatisfaction with a career? Deciding what we want to do a large part of every working day for the rest of our lives is so important we find making a career decision very threatening. We can slide into "just a job" and tell ourselves that what we are doing is "just for now," something temporary.

Taking a job on a temporary basis is fine unless it is a symptom that you are failing to face the issue of what you want to do on a long-time basis.

For the purpose of this laboratory application, assume that you have come to the point where you want to make a career choice. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that this sort of careful analysis is something that you only do once or twice during your working career. Actually the more times you do this the better for your career. The search for new opportunities is an ongoing process which will be useful throughout your life.

To be successful you need to make an analysis of your goals and skills. What do you want to do? What have you learned to do? What talents do you have? What are you good at? What are your interests? How can you put this all together to create a meaningful work situation for yourself?

**Know Yourself.** Begin your preparation by examining your personal priorities. Ask yourself questions such as the following: What would you like to be doing five years from now? Ten years? How would you measure success? Is money important? Peer approval? Social relevance? Leisure time activities? Personal relationships? Where would you like to work? Would you like a job that allows you to stay in the same location or would you prefer travelling? Do you want to live in a large city? A small community? A rural area? Do you like to organize people? Deal with information? Do you prefer creating ideas, projects, products? Do you like working in private or do you prefer working on a team? Would you prefer a mixture of both working situations? Do you like to deal with people individually or in large groups? As a supervisor or as a teammate, an equal? Do you like to make decisions and assume responsibility or do you prefer someone else to have the final responsibility?

Sometimes if you are unsure about the answers to such questions you can get help by going to your college counseling office and asking to take vocational and personal interest and aptitude tests. Another good method to help answer such questions is to write a brief history of your activities (paid and unpaid) which includes what you liked and disliked about each.

**Know the Market.** Having made a survey of your career hopes and aptitudes, you need to match your self assessment with openings in the current labor market. You should find out where organizations advertise positions of the sort you wish to find. More and more firms are advertising their positions in order to live up to governmental guidelines dealing with equal opportunities for women and minorities. Sometimes the advertisements are in general circulation newspapers and sometimes in more specialized journals, but a few hours in a public library or your college library can provide you with substantial information. You should make a list of the most promising leads and map a plan to approach them in some regular order. When making your

survey remember that you will usually not find exactly the job you want at the entry level. What you often need to do is to find some good career paths to the job you eventually want.

**The Resume.** A key opening step to joining the organization is the careful preparation of a resume of your education, training, and experience for a possible job. Your resume is an important message designed to help you get a chance for a job interview. Certain basic information is necessary for every good resume. The resume should include a description of the kind of position or positions you want, basic personal information, a summary of your educational background, and an outline of your work experiences.

A good resume is brief. If you can provide the necessary information in a one-page resume, great. That is ideal. If you have held a number of jobs and find one page too limiting, you could expand the resume to two pages, but you should resist adding any more. Too often a person writing a resume will put down everything that comes to mind. When you include unimportant as well as important accomplishments, a reader may get the impression that you are padding your resume in order to hide the fact that the main features are not strong.

The resume could include personal information such as your name, address, telephone numbers, marital status, age, health, number of children. You should provide the names of the educational institutions you attended after high school, dates you were there, degrees received, and major areas of study. List these items in order, beginning with the most recent school and degree first, then working backwards. Finally, summarize your work experiences with dates, employers, titles, responsibilities, and accomplishments.

Frequently you will want to include certain information, in addition to the basic core discussed above, because of your special background or because you are applying for a position with a particular organization and a particular hobby, travel experience, or honor will make you a more attractive applicant.

Figure 1 presents a sample to guide you in the preparation of your own resume. Remember the sample is only a guide; make any creative adaptations you can to present yourself in the best possible light. When preparing your own resume, take special care to make it look professional—make it concise, attractive in layout, and without errors in spelling or typing or grammar.

If you are sending out a number of applications you may not need or have the time to tailor each resume for each position. Individual adaptation is an excellent idea, however, and for particularly attractive jobs you should modify and individualize your resume, type a fresh copy, and tailor it to the specific position and organization.

Before writing the cover letter, spend some time in analyzing the