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Interpersonal
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Modern Organization

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Preface

The material in *Interpersonal Communication in the Modern Organization* is already familiar to thousands of men and women in business, industry, government, and education who have worked with one or several of the authors. Collectively, the authors of this text have had approximately seventy-five years of experience analyzing the communication problems of such organizations as state departments of education, the Department of Agriculture, the Treasury Department, the Internal Revenue Service, the Army, the Air Force, the Veterans' Administration of the United States, municipal governments, chambers of commerce, political parties, physicians' and nurses' organizations, juvenile judges, juvenile officers, hospital administrators, and a host of business concerns, including General Electric, U.S. Steel, General Motors, 3M Corp., Honeywell Aero, Honeywell Ordinance, IBM, Control Data, Ford, National Cash Register, General Mills, and Castle and Cooke.

Each author is a nationally recognized authority in interpersonal communication, and each has repeatedly tailored a training program in communication to meet the needs of a particular organization. The material in this book is the distillation of their years of experience.

The authors became enthusiastic about writing a practical, non-academic treatment of communication in the modern organization while interacting with members of organizations. These people were eager to learn but in no mood for frills. They demanded the maximum results in the shortest possible period of time. They were frustrated by involved academic theory. They wanted immediate practical help with their com-

munication problems. Explicitly and in vigorous language they demanded a briefing of plain talk without jargon. *Interpersonal Communication in the Modern Organization* is designed to meet these requirements. It contains only material that has been tested in many presentations to technical, managerial, and executive personnel in a wide range of business and professional groups.

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 book has four major emphases: (1) the organization and the small work groups; (2) interpersonal barriers to communication; (3) listening and interpersonal communication; and (4) persuasion in the organizational context. The book is divided into two parts. Part I, "The Organization and the Individual," describes the modern organization and its influence upon the nature and flow of speech communication. It also treats small group communications as these relate to the overall functions of the organization. Part I examines interpersonal communication from the viewpoint of what can be done to increase organizational efficiency and productivity.

Part II, "The Individual in the Organization," analyzes the role of a person in a group wherein he needs to become more effective as an individual interacting in a myriad of speech-communication situations. The emphasis in Part II is upon individual psychology, motivations, and speaking skills. In addition, Part II provides thorough treatment of listening skills and techniques of persuasion.

The content of this book is based on up-to-date research in communication and the related fields of sociology, psychology, anthropology, and business administration. The authors' experience with practical communication problems enables them to use case-study materials and examples that carry immediate conviction and understanding to people working in the complex modern organization.

Interpersonal Communication in the Modern Organization contributes to the applied liberal arts trends in higher education today. As Dr. Norman DeWitt, late Professor of Classics at the University of Minnesota, once stated: "If you learn something you can't use, you haven't been educated, you have been entertained." His test of usefulness was the criterion to be met in writing this book. It is the firm conviction of the authors that mastering the concepts and techniques contained therein will advance the liberal education of anyone using *Interpersonal Communication in the Modern Organization*.

Although the overall structure and the basic assumptions of the book are the common product of all the authors, primary responsibility for the materials in the various chapters is as follows: Ralph Nichols, Chapters 1, 10, 11, 12; Ernest Bormann, Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7; George Shapiro, Chapters 8, 9; William S. Howell, Chapters 13, 14, 15, 16; William S. Howell and Ernest Bormann, Chapter 2; Ernest Bormann and George Shapiro, Chapter 3.

Interpersonal Communication in the Modern Organization



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The Organization and the Individual

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

PART I

Increasingly, all of us are involved in the varied activities of multiple organizations. Membership in the basic family group as well as participation in the groups that compose organizations varying in complexity from the voluntary service club to the multimillion-dollar corporation or multibillion-dollar government agency challenges us to become effective leaders and participants within the corporate structure. Of necessity, we turn to the study of ways in which people work and play *together*. We must all learn to fit comfortably and productively into a culture built of interrelated, competitive, and interlocking pyramided organizations.

All organizations are held together by, and perform their functions through, interpersonal communication. Part I looks at the modern organization as a system for processing information, setting goals, making plans and decisions, implementing action, and evaluating results. The facilitating and inhibiting influences of the modern organization on the efficiency of message production and processing is described and analyzed. Particular stress points relating to the organization and the small work groups that compose it are identified. Ways in which these affect individuals participating in them are considered.

The Spoken Word in the Modern World

CHAPTER 1

People were able to talk to each other long before they learned to share their ideas and information through reading and writing. Thus, for the many thousands of years before language was either written or printed, speech was the only means of verbal communication. As co-operation among the members of a group became increasingly necessary, the crude cries and signals of primitive man slowly developed into a more formal and useful language.

Primitive men must have been excellent listeners—often their lives depended upon the cry of warning or alarm from a friend or companion. Moreover, the ability to hear the sounds made by birds and animals—and to interpret these sounds correctly—was vital if our early ancestors were to obtain food for their next meal.

Yes, life in the primitive jungle was aurally oriented. In the deep shadow of the rain forest the ear was a more dependable source of knowledge than the eye and was much more relied upon. Tribal leadership went to the man whose ears were most highly trained. Moreover, the dominance of the ear over the eye did not die with the birth of civilization; far from it. We were well into the fifteenth century before a German printer significantly changed our way of life.

Before Gutenberg, man lived in essentially a speaking and listen-