

SECOND EDITION

# COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS

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T. RICHARD CHEATHAM  
JAMES T. WATT



# Communication in Business

**2**<sup>nd</sup>  
edition

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# Preface

In the five years that have transpired since the first edition of this book was published, little has happened to diminish the initial statements made in the first preface. In fact, time and history now show them to understate and underemphasize the importance of communication in business today.

It is by communication, still faster and using more sophisticated technology, that a business receives and conveys information, transmits instructions and suggestions, practices motivation and persuasion. Communication is the life-blood of the organization and the means by which management gets things done. The greater emphasis on worldwide competition, depletion of natural resources, social inequities, pollution, quality of life, energy shortages, and government control points to a still greater importance for business to communicate more effectively with all its publics in the future.

This book is designed as an introductory overview—a survey of communication used in business today *with* some foundation in organizational and communication theory. By taking this approach, we have provided source material for understanding how, where, when, and why communication serves business. This allows us to include many important areas of business communication ignored or briefly touched on in other books. Several changes have been incorporated into this edition in an effort to make it more viable as a learning

tool. Materials considered relatively unimportant now have been deleted and other materials have been condensed. A new chapter on listening has been added and the applied writing section has been expanded. Admittedly, we leave gaps in our presentation, but we hope that exposure will stimulate readers to seek out more specific information about the varied and interesting communication areas.

Communication is something practiced by all, regardless of occupation or level of authority and responsibility. We all need to improve on this very vital skill, and for this reason, we felt that the inclusion of pragmatic guidelines was needed. In effect, this book was a pioneering effort to merge theory and practice, not only in speech and written communication, but also in such areas as nonverbal, visual, and mass communication as found in modern business activity.

Our reviewers, friends, and critics recommended that the organization employed in the first edition be retained, and so it has. To accomplish our objectives of presenting business communication in a logical, informative, and interesting manner, we have organized the book as follows:

Part I describes how communication is employed in business and the processes and systems employed. The topics and areas are management-oriented and provide the setting and understanding required to introduce the theoretical overlays.

Part II introduces and explores different communication theories, explaining their ramifications and applications to business needs. Understanding the theoretical bases of communication should be of great value in the self-improvement of communicative skills. The materials digested in this section are not usually found in a business communication text, but in an array of highly useful but specialized areas.

Part III focuses on the application of theory to practice. Presented is a useful survey and evaluation of oral and speech communication forms. While traditional presentation speech is included, emphasis is placed on the extensively employed one-to-one and small group interpersonal communication process. Written communication is next treated in the same manner. Included are aids to improve the effectiveness of letters, reports, and other commonly used written communiques. The section concludes with discussion and explanation of the mass communication process and business applications, advertising, and public relations.

At the end of each chapter, you will find discussion questions, projects and problems, suggested additional reading materials, and a list of periodicals pertaining to the subject matter. Lively discussion will put your communication skills to the test and should amplify your knowledge of the area. The projects have been designed to reinforce the reading material. They should prove both interesting and enlightening. A final word about the periodicals.

Read these from time to time to stay alert to the latest happenings and findings in the respective area. New research findings and developments occur daily and the periodicals are your best avenues to this information.

The Appendix includes suggestions on how you can better employ your communicative abilities when seeking or changing a position.

We are indebted to the many who have contributed ideas and suggestions in the formulation and the implementation of this book, including John C. Tootle, Eric S. Stein, James M. Lahiff, John D. Pettit, Jr., Larry L. Barker, Robert L. Kibler, Doug Andrews, Ted Arnold, Brian Walker, Bob Wesley, Mac McClure, and Marina Harrison. We wish to express our gratitude to those who have provided the many illustrations used and to those who have granted us permission to reproduce their efforts. We, of course, are solely responsible for what appears.

S. BERNARD ROSENBLATT  
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# Business Communication: Environment

The image features a minimalist design with two overlapping gray rectangles. The top rectangle is lighter and contains the title text. The bottom rectangle is darker and overlaps the bottom of the first. A small white vertical bar is positioned on the right side of the darker rectangle.





# Communication in business

1

## **key points to learn**

Why it is important to view a business firm as a system.

What business communication is.

How the communication process works.

The purposes for which managers use communication.

The various forms of business communications.

Why communication in business will become increasingly important.

“The business of communicating has become as important as finding more oil,” said a former president of a major oil company recently. This remark came, I am sure, after some frustrating efforts to communicate with the many publics of a modern business organization—especially one caught up in controversy and dramatic change.

Business organizations in general have had to adapt to numerous conflicting pressures coming from many sources. During the seventies there was a general growing barrage of anti-business criticism; employees were seeking more challenging and rewarding work; consumer interest groups exerted greater pressures on pricing and marketing strategy; and the government, through its ubiquitous agencies, reshaped many aspects of business operations previously thought beyond its scope of providence.

One characteristic of a healthy organization is its ability to adapt to pressures and change. Lahiff and Hatfield conducted a study to examine the changes in communication policies and practices in business organizations between the years 1973 and 1978. One hundred and eighty-three firms responded to the survey. These firms represented a broad spectrum of manufacturing and service industries. A summary of the significant changes in communication policies and practices revealed:

## I. Internal Communication

- A. Organizations are placing higher priorities on downward communication and attempting to improve on this practice. Employees, on the other hand, appear generally more inclined to question the contents of management's communication.
- B. The flow of upward communication in organizations has greatly improved during the five study years. Upper management has shown a high degree of willingness to listen to lower management and in turn, there appears to be a dramatic increase in the willingness among employees to speak their minds.
- C. A changing emphasis on communication formats appears to be emerging. Signs of this stem from:
  1. Important decisions are made more frequently by groups rather than by individuals.
  2. Employment interviews are playing more important roles in selection decisions.
  3. Greater emphasis is being placed on written communication with increased opportunity for communication training.

## II. External Communication

- A. Organizations are much more concerned about enhancing their public image than they were five years ago.
- B. In efforts to enhance their images, organizations are more receptive to communication from the public, are placing greater emphasis on truthfulness, and are having their executives increase their public speaking activities.<sup>1</sup>

The complexity of the communication problem, in both society and business, grows daily. Over a decade ago, John Platt estimated that the speed of communication in 1965 was ten million times faster than it was in 1865.<sup>2</sup> It may have doubled that since 1965.

These problems are not just those of small businesses but of all organizations. The world's largest communication organization, the American Telephone and Telegraph Co. (AT&T), has its share. With all of its technical know-how, its vast financial resources, its equipment and paraphernalia, the Bell Telephone division of AT&T has communication problems. In the March–April 1971 issue of the *Bell Telephone Magazine*, one article begins:

Within the greatest communication organization in the world we are hurt and puzzled by a seeming communications failure—the problem of talking with our employees. The fact that we are perhaps no worse off than any other comparable organization (perhaps even better) is small comfort. In a corporation of more than 1,000,000 population, such a gap can be destructive. We should perhaps replace the omnipresent safety plaque with one that reads,

### COMMUNICATE OR PERISH

---

<sup>1</sup>James M. Lahiff and John D. Hatfield, "The Winds of Change and Managerial Practices," *Journal of Business Communication*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Summer, 1978, pp. 19–28.

<sup>2</sup>John Platt, "What We Must Do," *Science*, No. 28, Nov. 1968, pp. 115–121.