
Part One

Introduction to Business Communication for Managers



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CHAPTER - 1

Business Communication for Managers

Welcome to the fast-paced world of advanced business communication—and to a paradox: for all the lip service given to the importance of communication, little is done to improve it. This paradox is especially noticeable in the business world, which focuses on bottom-line profits and performance. Managers proclaim the need for improved communication skills but often hesitate to invest in training their employees in communication skills. Managers see to it that those who are effective in communication are promoted and rewarded financially, but seldom do managers themselves have access to formal programs that are designed to improve these crucial skills.

Educational institutions—aware of the demand for communication skills—try to supply graduates with some degree of competence in communication. However, many demands compete for the students' attention; new topics work their way into the curriculum and new teaching methods are explored. One result is that for several decades the verbal skills of high school graduates have been slipping. Concern also exists about the skills of college graduates. A recent report from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching takes a clear stand on communication: "The foundation for a successful undergraduate experience is proficiency in the written and spoken word."¹ Examining the undergraduate experience, the report clearly attacks the inadequate amount of instruction and the approaches used in the teaching of communication in the United States.

College programs that prepare students for business feel pressure on their curricula, too. For example, in the last 15 years the study and use of computers have grown, typically, from one undergraduate course to inclusion in almost every business course. Laptops are often required tools in advanced business courses. To allow examination of new topics, such as computer applications, colleges often sacrifice basic skills, such as writing and speaking. All too often, one business communication course and several English courses are expected to turn around 20 years of laxity in communication training and to produce a graduate possessing the written and oral communication skills demanded by business.

Unfortunately, graduate business programs often widen this gap between what is wanted and what is delivered. The graduating MBA or MS who has solid writing and speaking skills and an appreciation for when and how to use them is the exception. Those with communication skills usually have acquired it informally, over many years, from a maturity of vision few hold. Those who work and seek a graduate business degree at the same time may be better able than others to see the

importance of effective communication in business and its inclusion in the graduate curriculum.

Communication skills can be taught relatively easily, but are particularly difficult to acquire, especially when a person has a solid foundation in the basics. When students are bright and motivated, and the skills being taught are tailored to them, the improvement can be dramatic.

Consider yourself lucky to be exposed to advanced business communication. The skills you acquire will assist you in studying, in acquiring a better job or more responsibility on your present job, and in doing that job more effectively than those who lack the skills. For a “fast-tracker”—the person with a mission, plans for how to achieve it, and the skills and knowledge that will be required—extraordinary communication skills are a necessity.

This book is written for use in an advanced business communication course, such as management, organizational communication, or business communication. The text is especially appropriate for advanced undergraduate studies and for graduate-level studies when these students have some knowledge of and experience in business. The text works well in business training seminars for the same reasons.

The goal of this chapter is to examine the crucial place and function of communication in business. To accomplish this goal, we look at the views of business leaders and scholarly literature as they relate to the importance of communication skills, to communication in business, to communication and management, to communication and ethics, to communication in cross-cultural messages, and to fears about communication. Finally, this chapter identifies how top businesspeople differ in their communication from others in business.

The Importance of Communication Skills

Communication does not exist in a vacuum; it is not something you do in the absence of other information. While you may practice accounting or finance in a mutually exclusive fashion, when you communicate, it is usually about something other than communication. Communication is a process that oils the gears that turn the machinery of business. Supporting this process are the skills of communication—skills that occupy as much as 90 percent of a top executive’s working day.²

Research supports the view that communication skills are important in business. For example, in a study of 139 Texas business executives, knowledge of business communication was rated very important by 85 percent (far ahead of knowledge of principles of management, at 20 percent). The skills that require attention, according to 100 randomly selected Fortune 500 executives, are oral presentations, memo-writing, basic grammar, informational report-writing, and analytical report-writing. Another study of executives in Fortune 500 companies supports these findings but extends the important communication skills to include external communication and technical applications.³

In 1995, The National Business Education Association developed a set of standards for business school graduates. The standards were developed by business educators and then reviewed and approved by business professionals. The standards

listed five communication skill areas: (1) Foundations of communication (written, oral, social and business listening, and informational reading); (2) Social communication; (3) Technological communication; (4) Employment communication; and (5) Organizational communications.⁴ We will cover all of these areas, which we, too, believe are critical for the advanced business communication graduate.

Visual Skills

About 85 percent of our learning comes from visual stimuli; when spoken and visual stimuli are combined, enhanced learning can occur. Additional studies of comprehension endorse the value of visual support. For example, when participants only listened to a message, they remembered 70 percent of the message after three hours and only 10 percent after three days. Using only a visual message, recall was 72 percent after three hours and 35 percent after three days. These figures jumped dramatically, however, to 85 percent and 65 percent, respectively, when both spoken and visual communication were used. Other studies substantiate these results.⁵

Even though businesspeople have long been aware of the visual element of communication, they have been negligent in paying it much respect. Perhaps this lack of respect occurs because visual communication exists in a more artistic realm (as opposed to more central business issues, such as finance or management). However, numerous studies of the value of visual matter (particularly in supporting written and spoken communication) and of new technologies for preparing and sharing such visuals have increased the attention given to visual support.

The rationale for recall of pictures versus words lies in the speed advantage of learning from pictures. This speed is due at least partially to the ability of pictures to evoke mental images. Therefore, both written and spoken presentations benefit from visual support. Seeing words improves recall; seeing pictures provides even more benefits.

Balchin and Coleman extend the distinction between forms of visual communication to four basic intellectual skills: literacy, numeracy, articulacy, and graphicacy.⁶ **Literacy** includes the basic skills of reading and writing. **Numeracy** expresses communication in numbers and mathematical notation. **Articulacy** brings in the art of spoken communication. **Graphicacy** connotes the visual communication of relationships not found in the other three skills. Integration of these four skills, the authors believe, leads to truly effective communication. As we settle into the twenty-first century, an additional literacy is emerging: **technical literacy**, which is the ability to appropriately use technological tools in an information society. Such tools include the Internet, e-mail, Web sites, and computers in general.⁷ Certainly technical literacy is rapidly changing. Typing has given way to keyboarding; some rely on computer input by voice rather than through the fingers.⁸ In many ways technical literacy will determine one's ability to communicate through the other four literacies.

By 2005, it is predicted that 75 percent of Americans will regularly access the Internet (50 percent in 2002). Streaming media will be a reality, with 50 percent of U.S. households having high-speed connections, although only 10 percent of the world's population will have Internet access. Cellular phones or other wireless devices will be used by 90 percent of Americans, with 50 percent accessing the Net with those devices. Over 31 percent of the world's population will be using wireless devices.⁹

The need to teach graphics (as well as speaking and writing) is supported by the research of Pollock and others. Their study of 150 executives listed in *Who's Who in Finance and Industry* recommends teaching graphic analysis to better prepare the advanced student.¹⁰

Chapter 3 of this text is devoted to understanding the role of visual support of written and spoken business communication. That chapter also explores various methods of preparing visual support.

Written Skills

Most studies—particularly the older ones—indicate that people see written communication as a neglected skill. Indeed, 79 percent of 218 executives in one study identified the ability to write as one of the most neglected business skills.¹¹ Within that same group, 44 percent said writing more clearly, in a better-organized way, was a major goal. Approximately the same percentage felt that better writing skills increased their productivity and was of high importance in their own career advancement.

When *Fortune* magazine reporters talked to successful corporate executives about business training, executive after executive said, in frustration, “Teach them to write better.” The plea was not for the ability to do fancy writing but, rather, fundamental writing, “with clarity, precision, brevity, and force of logic.” Hoyt Hudson, vice president of information systems at InterAccess, adds this: “One of the most surprising features of the information revolution is that the momentum has turned back to the written word. Someone who can come up with precise communication has a real advantage in today’s environment.”¹²

Young employees also understand their lack of effective writing skills. Hiemstra et al. discovered that 59 percent of CPAs believed that when they entered their profession their writing skills were not adequate for effective communication with other business professionals.¹³ A similar study of CPAs found 80 percent “felt most deficient in the ability to organize ideas effectively and to write concisely.”¹⁴ Leaders in the accounting profession, including both practicing CPAs and educators, have indicated how important they believe written communication to be. In 1990 the Accounting Education Change Commission stated that accounting graduates *must possess* communication skills. This was followed in 1994 by a joint statement issued by the Institute of Management Accountants and the Financial Executive Institute, asking that college accounting programs increase the communication-skills emphasis. This resulted in the addition of a required communication course in many business schools. Also in 1994, the CPA exam began to be used in evaluating candidates’ writing skills.¹⁵ Another exam, the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), has also added a writing component to its entrance examination.¹⁶

Companies appear to be increasing their emphasis on internal written communication skills and are therefore offering more training in this area. In some studies, the recommendation for areas needing improvement is quite specific; for example, one such study identifies long and short reports, progress reports, and analytical reports.¹⁷

The authors of this text consider the skill of writing to be so important that a total of seven chapters are devoted to the subject. These chapters are arranged in two sections: brief messages and expanded messages. The contents of the writing

chapters cover all the writing needs expressed by employers that were noted in the studies mentioned above.

Spoken Skills

Not all the experts or surveys point to written communication as the most important skill area. Many suggest that spoken communication, which may take up more of an executive's time than written communication, is more important and demands more training.¹⁸ Executives listed specific kinds of spoken communication: person-to-person, telephone, informal group discussions, formal group meetings, interviews, and formal presentations.¹⁹

Business professionals often remarked that oral skills are used more frequently than written skills at the beginning corporate levels.²⁰ Presentation skills have also been used by managers as a discriminator for employment performance.²¹

Educators and employers, however, do not always agree on the relative importance of the specific areas of business communication. In a survey of business communication educators and employers, employers placed much heavier emphasis on oral communication, interpersonal skills, and listening. Educators, on the other hand, advocated written communication and theoretical aspects of communication.²²

Sometimes the effects of spoken communication in the workplace are subtle. Tannen, among others, chronicles differences in spoken communication in men versus women.²³ She believes lessons learned in childhood carry over to the workplace. Boys learn to play in larger groups, follow a leader's directives, and use language to call attention to themselves. Girls learn to play with a best friend, establish consensus, and ostracize those who seek to stand out. These behaviors that everyone must follow but few recognize may translate into females being disadvantaged in a male-dominated business world or even having problems with other females when they "break the rules." For suggestions on how to communicate across genders, see Table 1.1.

While many surveys underscore the importance of either written or spoken communication, others encourage a balance between the two. This combination of topics is strongly endorsed in the development of an MBA business communication course syllabus. Academic experts, managers, and MBA recipients agree on the essential nature of both written and spoken communication. Both, they believe, need to be addressed in MBA and advanced undergraduate-level business communication courses.²⁴

Four different chapters of this text will emphasize the importance of spoken skills: Chapter 11 examines formal business presentations; Chapter 12 focuses on person-to-person and small-group meeting management; Chapter 14 introduces cutting-edge skills so you can effectively respond to interviews with reporters; and Chapter 16 describes how to make a classroom or office case presentation.

Listening Skills

With speaking comes its equally important counterpart: listening. Some estimates suggest we spend up to 70 percent of our workday communicating, with 45 percent of that time spent in listening activities. Interestingly, most research indicates we do not listen well.²⁵

Some strategies for women dealing with men in business include the following.

1. Speak up! Don't allow yourself to be interrupted.
2. Avoid tag endings that may make you sound unsure of yourself, such as "isn't it?" "don't you think?" or "is that OK?"
3. Don't take male comments too personally. Remember that most men are direct and like to get straight to the point.
4. Focus on being logical and avoid giving unnecessary details (storytelling).
5. Avoid personal items. Stick to job-related issues and current affairs.

Some strategies for men dealing with women in business include the following.

1. Focus on being polite by using words such as "please" and "thank you."
2. Avoid monopolizing conversations, speaking for the woman, or interrupting her.
3. Don't call a woman names such as "honey," "dear," or "sweetheart."
4. Avoid barking commands to women. They prefer and respond much better to polite requests.
5. Pay attention when women speak. Use good eye contact, nod, and use "I'm listening" sounds such as "uh-huh."

Source: Adapted from C. Tymson, "Business Communication—Bridging the Gender Gap," retrieved November 11, 1999, at <http://www.tymson.com.au/articles.html>.

Listening is a critically needed skill in business.²⁶ A recent survey of executives revealed that 80 percent believed listening is the most important skill needed in American corporate offices. Its productive usage has been proven to enhance employee job performance and career advancement.²⁷ While communication skills are usually listed as a core managerial competence, the skill of listening often finds its way to the *top* of the communication skill list.²⁸

Research by Maes et al. has found listening skills ranked second in importance, but first in frequency of use.²⁹ Brownell's research displayed that when managers actually see weak listening skills in employees, they attempt to present listening instruction that improves the needed skills.³⁰

Wolvin and Coakley contributed significantly to the place of listening training by developing a listening taxonomy classification system. Their five levels of listening skills are used by managers to help employees understand how they receive and send information. At the first level, **discrimination**, a person cognitively interprets auditory and visual content received from others without additional behavior required. At the **comprehensive** level, a person sorts information for understanding and retention. Again, response is not required. All employees use the first two levels continually at every stage of business interaction. Level three, **therapeutic** listening, resembles the interactive process used by counselors. Here the employee's behavior creates a supportive climate where they empathetically hear and behaviorally respond with feedback to others. At the **critical** assessment level, a listener either accepts or rejects a speaker's verbal offering. Appropriate behavioral responses follow the listener's decision. If persuaded to agree they act in positive response. If they disagree they fail to take action. The final level, **appreciative**, is the everyday

stage of basic interpersonal listening for enjoyment. Here we gravitate toward, and interact with, people who listen to us.³¹

At every level of the listening process a listener uses both verbal and nonverbal attending behavior that enhances the particular level. Nonverbal attending behavior includes factors like body movement, gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions. Verbal behavior includes making comments that encourage or discourage enhanced communication. Healthy organizational communication is promoted when listening behavior is both appropriate and effective.

Lewis and Reinsch labeled effective listening as when a listener follows directions, gives appropriate eye contact, and displays general attentiveness. Research indicates business managers do not listen well.³² Hunt and Cusella surveyed training directors of Fortune 500 companies and found they rated their managers and subordinates between “fair” and “poor” on listening effectiveness.³³ Barker et al. found in their study of U.S. and Canadian managers, who were also leaders in their professional management associations, that almost 75 percent of the respondents classified their own listening behavior as passive or detached, “less-effective,” listeners.³⁴

Because employees communicate throughout the day, listening training focuses on helping them develop better listening skills, which enhances work performance and the quality of their personal lives. It is also a common denominator in being promoted. Sadly, though, listening effectiveness is often unchanged by corporate listening training programs. The Barker et al. study found this was because of the short duration of such training; “listening must be practiced, and practiced correctly, for one to retain or sharpen proficiency.”³⁵ The research by Pearce et al. showed that university classrooms were ideal training grounds for improving listening skills, because of continual practice sessions.³⁶

As advanced business students you have a wonderful opportunity to work on enhancing this important skill area in your numerous business classes. Case courses are especially good for this training. Chapter 15 presents several steps you can take to become a more effective listener. You can sharpen your listening effectiveness right away when you:

- Mentally and physically prepare for each dialogue;
- Use attending skills, like facial expressions or body language, to interact with each speaker;
- Ask clarifying questions at appropriate times, but do not interrupt a speaker;
- Know the other’s point of view, but don’t judge or jump to conclusions; and
- Provide feedback.

Reading Skills

While you probably agree that visual, written, spoken, and listening communication skills are critical factors in your future employment success, the area of reading skills may not rate as high for you. Most of us see the critical necessity of reading as a given. However, a recent report by the Conference Board of Canada, “Employability Skills 2000+,” noted that the sum of a person’s employability is the skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed to progress in today’s work world. Predom-

inant on the Canadian list of skills is “reading and understanding information, then sharing the information.”³⁷

Certainly not everyone reads in the same fashion, but because businesspeople spend so much time reading e-mail, reports, memos, or letters, some suggestions for improving your critical reading ability are in order:

1. Think about the title of the manuscript if it has one; what does it suggest regarding the content? Is it a comprehensive article (“A Thorough Discussion of . . .”), a historical or documentary review (“A Review of . . .”), an organization of existing information (“A Taxonomy of . . .”), a position statement (“The School Board’s Failing Marks”), or persuasion to action (“A Proposal to . . .”)?
2. Get a feel for the whole package. This might come from a table of contents, which should be scrutinized for major sections and amount of space devoted to each of them. If there is an abstract or executive summary, certainly read it and reread it. However, be aware that it may not fairly represent the article. Keep an open and critical mind. If you find no table of contents or abstract, page through the article and pay attention to sections, headings, and subheadings. Note also the relative space given to the sections.
3. Now—finally—read the text. First read it quickly for an overall feel for the content. You then will need to reread for deeper understanding of the content. Others prefer their first reading to be careful, slow, and methodical. With either technique, consider highlighting (to capture your reactions) or annotating (which combines underlining or highlighting but adds margin notes that interpret or react to the keyed phrases).

Annotation is the more valuable approach if you need a thorough analysis of a complex message. You might want to generate your own system of highlighter colors or penciled circles, underlines, brackets, or arrows to represent places of confusion, disagreement, importance, or summary.

4. Examine tables, graphs, or other illustrations and think about how they complement or supplement the text. You might also challenge them to see if they misrepresent data, as discussed in Chapter 3.
5. Compare the message to other known information and challenge its assumptions and arguments. One approach for testing arguments is the “ABC Test” that asks: Is the information *a*ppropriate, is the support *b*elievable, and is the support *c*onsistent and *c*omplete?³⁸

Following these steps should help you to read more critically and with greater understanding and comprehension. It may be more memorable as well. The strategic process of reading case situations will help you polish this skill area. In Chapter 15, we describe several steps to take in reading to analyze, remember, and solve problems through the use of basic business cases.

Communication in Business

While the results of research presented so far suggest that communication is important in business, the focus has been more on the importance of communication itself and less on its business application. This section presents the importance of

communication in three main business dimensions: obtaining a job, doing a job, and maintaining and improving a career. You can find additional support in *Employment Strategies for Career Success*, a companion booklet to this text.

Communication and Obtaining a Job

Communication skills can help you acquire a first job or a better job. Surveys of business recruiters emphasize the esteem they have for communication skills. One hundred forty recruiters picked written and oral communication skills as the most important ability for applicants—over computer sciences, accounting, management, and six other business areas. Studies of personnel managers, upper-level managers, business managers, and businesspeople drew the same conclusion. Another study concluded, “The most common skill sought by MBA hiring organizations was communication (verbal and nonverbal), with 85 percent of respondents including this characteristic on the candidate-evaluation form.”³⁹ A study of 500 managers determined oral communication was the highest-ranked competency in hiring decisions.⁴⁰ Additional testimonials from individual recruiters and in the popular press abound.⁴¹

Communication on the Job

On the job, poor communication skills can be harmful. A study of 443 companies asked whether they were happy with worker skills. Eighty percent said employees need improvement in their written communication skills.⁴² A survey of business school deans and personnel directors of Fortune 500 companies clearly identified poor writing skills as the most common weakness of young executives. On the other hand, the survey identified the most successful executives as those who can communicate their own ideas to others. Not only are business practitioners more successful when they possess effective communication skills, but superior communication with subordinates also is considered the single most important factor in enhancing job satisfaction and group cohesiveness.⁴³

Communication Related to Promotions

Just as communication skills are important in getting and doing a job, they also continue to support businesspeople throughout their business careers. Larry McConnell, director of information technology at the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles, says that unless you can communicate, your career will level off.⁴⁴ Other executives attest that ability to communicate facilitates promotions, upward mobility, and success.

In a study that examined 5,299 newly promoted executives, the authors found that these executives cited communication as playing the most significant role in their promotions.⁴⁵ Both oral and written communication were listed by nearly 80 percent of the executives as the single most important factor in the career preparation of a young person. Finance and accounting ranked second and third, respectively. Bennett and Olney’s study of vice presidents at Fortune 500 companies determined that 97.7 percent of them believe communication skills had boosted their advancement to a top executive position.⁴⁶

Communication and Management

Although some writers separate communication study from management study, the two are tightly interwoven. Management communication, as a discipline, has a longer tradition than business communication.

Most of the major writers on management philosophy stress the central role of communication in successful management. The trend of identifying this central role continues today. Table 1.2 presents a chronology of management views of communication from early in the 20th century.⁴⁷

Also stressing the important joint role of communication and management, former *Harvard Business Review* editor David Ewing says, "Management communication is the number-one problem in business today. While the technology has advanced in leaps and bounds, managers' and academics' understanding of the substance of the process has not."⁴⁸

Table 1.2 Management's View of Communication

Year	Person	Observation
1916	Fayol	Managerial work is a set of composite functions that includes communication.
1930s	Gulick	Management has seven functional areas, including directing and reporting (which include communication).
1938	Barnard	The first executive function is providing a system of communication.
1957	Simon	The administrative process cannot influence the decisions of the individual without communication.
1966	Katz & Kahn	The exchange of information and transmission of meaning are the very essence of an organization.
1973	Mintzberg	Managerial jobs have ten working roles; communication and interpersonal relations are found in three of the roles.
1974	Drucker	Communication is one of five basic management functions.
1982	Peters and Waterman	Open, informal communication is one of eight characteristics of the best-run American companies.
1983	Kanter	The most common roadblock for managers to overcome is poor communication.
1988	Iacocca	You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your ideas won't get you anywhere.
1991	Blanchard	Communication is a basic skill for the effective one-minute manager.
1995	Gates	Communication is the new revolution; the information superhighway is part of it.
1997	Kotter	Without credible communication, and a lot of it, employee hearts and minds are never captured.
2000	Amelio	Developing excellent communication skills is absolutely essential to effective leadership.

Communication and Ethics

A day seldom passes but that media present accounts of unethical or illegal behavior: improprieties at banks and brokerage houses, inappropriate political influence, and devious business dealings. Other types of unethical or illegal conduct reported daily include: conflict of interest, employee discrimination, undercutting product safety and quality, cybercrime, sexual harassment, rights violations, lying, theft, and the list goes on. In 2001 the business world was shaken as Enron, a Fortune Top Ten company, was charged with creative accounting, deceptive partnerships, manufactured earnings, and insider trading. Pulled in with Enron were financial giants such as J.P. Morgan Chase, Citigroup, Merrill Lynch, Bank of America, Barclays, and others. Big Five accounting firm Arthur Andersen, guilty of shredding documents and accused of participating in the Enron scheme, almost totally collapsed.⁴⁹ Communication played a critical role in Enron's fall. Internal documents such as e-mails, memoranda, and excerpts of minutes from meetings of Enron's board and the board's financial committee reveal the extent of unethical activity.⁵⁰ Clearly no single individual or organization was responsible for Enron's demise; rather a collective culture of indifference to ethical standards was communicated to all parties involved.

In order to better understand the ethical considerations confronting business today, this section will first examine the nature of business ethics, the impact of ethics on employees and the organization, and the critical way ethics drives communication issues. The second part of the section focuses on how technology has raised new concerns about communication ethics.

Business Ethics

Ethics are standards of behavior that tell us what we should do in a variety of situations. Some standards are codified in the form of government laws and regulations, others are set down as company policies, and still others are embodied in an individual's character, or what we often call integrity. As an advanced business communicator, you will need to determine your ethical responsibilities as an individual, as a member of an organization, and as a member of society. Read Figure 1.1 and see if you would say "yes" to the questions.

In the business discipline ethics is often examined from three concentric circles of responsibility. First, individual ethics focuses on the character and behavior of an individual. Second, organizational ethics examines the workplace behavior of individuals and of the group. Third, social ethics examines the systemic impact of business actions in the global arena.

Individual Ethics

Individual ethics can be seen in two ways: as ethical conduct, or the actions of people, and as ethical character, which tells us something about the nature of who individuals are as people.⁵¹

Behavior. Many philosophical theories are drawn upon to analyze the behavior of both people and organizations. Two primary theories consider the ends and the means of behavior. **Consequential behavior** is end-result oriented. If it is selfish in

Figure 1.1

A Question of Ethics

A survey of 250 meeting planners and industry suppliers asked 12 questions and compared answers to an ethics experts panel's feelings. Selected results appear below.

Question	Percent saying "yes"		Ethics Rating*
	Meeting Planners	Suppliers	
Have you ever "borrowed" company office supplies for personal use?	64%	**	2.5
Have you ever "stretched the truth" on a résumé to make yourself look more appealing?	49%	**	9.5
Have you ever spent a good portion of a work day on personal business?	36%	**	7.5
Have you or has anyone in your organization ever accepted a personal vacation or similar "perk" from a supplier as a thank-you for booking business?	33%	63%	7.5
Have you ever padded an expense report?	37%	49%	6.5

* "1" is minor infraction, "10" major violation

** not reported

Source: Melinda Ligos, "True Confessions—Begging, Borrowing, and . . . Stealing?" *Successful Meetings*, November 1999, pp. 34–40.

nature, and focused strictly on individual gains, it is called **ethical egoism**. If the behavior is concerned with generating the best result, for the greatest number of people, or the greatest balance of good over harm, it is called **utilitarianism**.

Behavior that is **duty-based** concentrates on whether the action itself is good (truthful, promise-keeping, fair, respectful of others), and whether job responsibilities, ethical codes, or laws bind the businessperson to behave accordingly.⁵² Within this concentration two other theories emerge. The **rights approach** examines the duty we have to protect and respect the moral rights of people. "This approach starts from the belief that humans have a dignity based on their ability to choose freely what they do with their lives, and have a right not to be treated as mere means to other ends."⁵³ Common rights that we should all enjoy are life, liberty, freedom to choose the life we want to lead, to be told the truth, not to be enslaved or injured, and so on.

Justice is another duty-based approach. Managers have a duty to treat employees fairly and equally, or to at least tell them why equality is not possible. Laws protecting civil rights are often the guides that we use in determining correct behavior in this category.

Character. Ethical activity can also be analyzed by focusing on the virtuous characteristics of the individual businessperson, such as courage, temperance, compassion, integrity, prudence, self-control, honesty, and fidelity.

Some ethicists separate out the virtue of compassion as an ethical standard. “This approach suggests that relationships are the basis of all human society and compassion and concern for others is essential to relationships and to the function of society. Therefore, ethical actions should always serve the interests of others with whom one deals and should serve to deepen the relationships one has with family, community, officemates, and even unfamiliar individuals we encounter.”⁵⁴

Organizational Ethics

When unethical events occur, a person’s public image falls under attack. As a businessperson you sometimes do not have to be guilty of actual improprieties. If the organization, division, or office that you are managing is the place for the wrong behavior, you may be seen as guilty by association. Regardless of the specific behavior that occurred, CEOs of several large corporations have seen their golden image shattered within the past few years. Witness: “Andersen CEO Joseph Berardino . . . Richard McGinn at Lucent, Durk Jager at Procter & Gamble, Doug Ivestger at Coca-Cola, Jill Barad at Mattel, Richard Thoman at Xerox, Jacques Nasser at Ford Motor, Chuck Conaway at Kmart, Al Dunlap at Sunbeam, and Masatoshi Ono at Bridgestone/Firestone.”⁵⁵

Such examples represent strong organizations and individuals that suddenly experienced a crisis. Although crisis events do not necessarily signal illegal or unethical behavior, illegal and unethical behavior may have either caused the problem or else become a part of the process that individuals or companies follow in trying to solve crisis situations. Chapter 13 describes crisis events in detail, and the critical ethical action and communicative behavior individuals and organizations take in bringing such events to an end.

Within the business world our ethical conduct and character come into play through our personal and workplace behavior and communication. At Enron, executive presentations were under attack for being dishonest and deceptive. The CEO, Jeffrey Skilling, was not believed when he declared to the U.S. Senate investigating committees that he had absolutely no knowledge of any wrongdoing taking place in his company.

Coercion and manipulation are often used by businesspeople who lack character and virtue, elements that comprise the foundation of ethical communication. These elements distinguish normatively the roles and responsibilities of ethical communicators, and the boundaries within which they must act.

Many companies help employees stay legal and ethical by creating an ethical climate and developing a code of ethics (a set of rules to follow), or an ethical credo (values that the companies uphold). Organizational ethical codes and credos are not new. J.C. Penney began as the Golden Rule Company. Its code was written in 1913. The Johnson and Johnson credo was penned in 1941, and is credited with having helped J&J executives make critical decisions during its mid-1980s Tylenol product-tampering crisis.

In organizations that have a strong concern with all employees being ethical and doing the right thing, an ethics office usually exists. This is especially true following the 1991 establishment of the U.S. Sentencing Commission and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines (FSG). “In a response to deter white-collar crime, all business executives, for the first time, became responsible for the misdeeds of their companies and subordinates. In essence, with this law the government considers a corporation to be a moral agent, responsible for its employees’ conduct. The FSG

gave tremendous impetus to the establishment of hundreds of ethics offices, for it provided an incentive for organizations to develop and implement ethics and compliance programs.”⁵⁶

An ethics office makes it easier for an organization to communicate with its people about legal and ethical expectations and processes for doing the right thing. According to the Ethics Officer Association, a benchmarked ethics program includes the following 12 items:

1. An organizational vision statement,
2. A values statement that connects the vision and expected ethical behavior,
3. A company code of ethics,
4. An ethics officer who oversees the administration of the ethics program,
5. An ethics committee that reviews company policy and practices,
6. An ethics communication strategy,
7. A mandatory ethics training program for all organizational personnel,
8. An ethics help line where employees can call in suspicious behavior,
9. A measurement of how the program works and rewards for employees who do the right thing,
10. A monitoring and tracking system for how well policies are carried out correctly,
11. A periodic evaluation for the entire ethics program, and
12. Ethical leadership by top management.⁵⁷

All individuals have ways of devising their own “quick tests” to tell when they are approaching the line between right and wrong. Rotarian Herbert J. Taylor designed one such test in 1932. Taylor was asked to take charge of a company facing bankruptcy. He created a 24-word code of ethics for his employees. Rotary International adopted the code in 1943. All Rotary Club members at weekly meetings recite it. It asks: “Of the things we think, say, or do:

Is it the truth?

Is it fair to all concerned?

Will it build goodwill and better friendships?

Will it be beneficial to all concerned?”⁵⁸

Examine your own behavior. Figure 1.2 gives four sample questions like those used in organizational ethics training.

Social Ethics

The third of our three ethical arenas is the larger social and global marketplace. Both individual and organizational ethical behavior impact this third area. When one CEO proposes to a corporate board of directors that massive downsizing is in order to cut costs and boost yearly profits, and the organization follows through with the downsizing and fails to tell employees that money in their retirement plans was not protected, both of those actions tremendously impact society. As a result of the numerous unethical deeds of the early 2000s, society has called for new rules to govern organizations and their managers. These new rules are evolving from public-interest groups, the political parties, and leading corporations.

Assume you work for one of the major brokerage houses as an analyst. Would the following behaviors be legal? Ethical?

1. You become aware that one of your clients has a new process that could lead to sizeable profits from a new product. The news is not public. Would it be legal to buy stock in the company? Ethical?
2. Based on #1 above, you chat with a friend about the situation and are overheard by a person nearby. Can that person buy stock before the public announcement? Would it be ethical?
3. Your boss offers to let you in on some insider trading that you both know is illegal as a favor for something you did for her. Ethical?
4. A broker friend at another firm recommends buying stock in an unknown organization and appears to have inside information. You don't ask any questions. Can you buy stock in the company?

Answers. Legal? 1, 3, and 4 are illegal. Ethical? As is so often the case, it depends on whom you ask and your own values and principles.

Source: Modified from Thor Valdmanis and Tom Lowry in "Wall Street's New Breed Revives Inside Trading," *USA Today*, November 4, 1999, p. B-1.

What are an organization's responsibilities? On one side there is a large group that takes a narrow, **stockholder** view of corporate responsibility. They believe, as Milton Friedman has long suggested, that an organization's primary responsibility is to maximize profits for its owners. This should happen within the boundaries of open and free competition and by obeying the laws that govern society. Friedman and others argue that managers are not trained in social work, and should not be pushed into compliance of spending stockholder's money on social causes—that is, refraining from price increases, spending money on equipment required by law but not wanted by the corporation, or hiring the hard-core unemployed.⁵⁹

On the other side a segment of society takes a broader, **stakeholder** view of organizations. They see organizations as artificial persons, created by society, but made up of individuals who set goals and policies and perform actions that impact society as a whole. Out of this operation arises great social and economic power. That power must be channeled toward society in responsible ways. In fact the legitimacy of organizations is based on the presumption that they exist to serve a moral purpose in society by providing needed goods and services, rather than on the ability to maximize profits. Within the arena of stockholder-stakeholder responsibility the many social issues of the 2000s are being played out. These issues include corporate governance, equity and fairness, environmental and ecological concerns, employment and respect issues, and the public-private sector relationships.

Regardless of how the above issues will be resolved, corporations in the years to follow will find their practices and products being repeatedly subject to moral scrutiny. While examination of ethical issues is not the primary domain of communication studies, certainly the communication of messages in an ethical fashion is germane to the study of advanced business communication. Therefore, appearing

throughout this text are comments, suggestions, and case studies recalling the need for ethical behavior.

Ethics and Technology

On August 25, 2000, Emulex, a fiber-optic communications equipment company, experienced a crisis. Bloomberg, a leading financial news service, reported the Emulex chief executive had resigned and the company had restated its earnings for the past two years. Within 15 minutes the price of Emulex shares dropped from \$103 to \$45 a share. Other news services quickly reported the story. The truth was, the story was a lie. Emulex was the victim of someone outside the organization issuing a fake press release.⁶⁰

Technology has introduced new concerns about ethics and communication. To give you a flavor of how questions of ethics work their way into communication, consider how easily photographs that we see daily in the media can be digitally modified. Here are some incidents:

- When actor Dustin Hoffman was digitally given high heels and an evening gown in a *Los Angeles Magazine* story, he was awarded \$3 million in a lawsuit over the image.
- *Time* magazine was criticized for altering a cover picture of O. J. Simpson to make him look more sinister.
- *Newsweek* upset the Society of Professional Journalists for touching up the teeth of Bobbi McCaughey, the woman who gave birth to septuplets.⁶¹
- A newspaper acquires a photograph of a prominent person who is visiting the city. The problem is that the person is obviously holding a cigarette. Because the newspaper does not want to promote smoking, an electronic darkroom is used to remove the offending cigarette.⁶²

Photographs, drawings, and commercial designs can now be easily and quickly scanned with high resolution into a computer, modified slightly (to avoid copyright infringement), and issued as one's own work. Software is available with hundreds of images, but an inexpensive scanner can duplicate images from magazines or newspapers at no cost. Laws are relatively clear about taking someone else's copyrighted work, but the issue of how much electronic modification may legally occur is still being decided.

Another ethical and legal consideration that is emerging but not yet resolved relates to the ownership of another person's text or graphic image. The ease with which one can scan text from a publication; capture a graphic image, a digital music file, or source code from a Web page on the Internet; or locate and copy original text via electronic information databases is alarming.

Electronic Plagiarism

Electronic plagiarism is the term applied to this problem. Plagiarism is using another person's ideas or phrasing as your own work, without giving credit. E-plagiarism is the electronic process of doing the same. It is a growing problem on college campuses. Three events brought its seriousness to light. In May 2000, a science professor at the University of California-Berkeley found 45 out of 300 term papers had

material that had been electronically lifted. In May 2001, a study disclosed that a Rutgers University professor had found 15 percent of the required term papers in his classes had been obtained from Web sites or term-paper “mills.” Also in the study, 52 percent of the students had copied sentences from the Internet without crediting them. A University of Virginia physics professor found that out of 1,500 student papers, 122 had been plagiarized. In some instances passages were identical, while in others entire papers were the same.⁶³

Colleges and professors are taking the offense on this issue. In each of the above violations the professor was using software created to detect e-plagiarism. When students submitted their papers by e-mail, or turned them in with a data disk, their files were converted into digital mathematical algorithms, which were then sent to virtually every Internet site. Feedback disclosed the copied material with as few as six words and the URL where it was located.⁶⁴

Ethically, the use of plagiarized work is dishonest and wrong. It devalues another’s work and it allows the offender to take unfair advantage of another person. To protect yourself, your colleagues, and your business, observe the following precautions.

Do Not:

- use a paper purchased, or obtained free, from an online research term-paper service or competitive intelligence company;
- use another colleague’s work without that person’s approval;
- use a paper written for you by a colleague or parent;
- use a paper or materials from an online source without proper acknowledgment;
- use electronic material (written, graphic, photo, etc.) and citing documentation, yet leaving out quotations; and
- use portions of electronic data without proper citation.⁶⁵

Do:

- use your own ideas and words; and
- give credit for material you use.⁶⁶

Cross-Cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communications support international business, and international business is the business of the 2000s and beyond. Between the 1980s and 2000, international trade increased three times faster than the world’s gross domestic product. This produced great potential for both countries and multinational corporations.⁶⁷ Certain countries like Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong in the Pacific Rim acquired attention for the strength of their economies, management styles, productivity, and innovativeness. Presently China, Vietnam, and Cambodia are making rapid strides to develop their economic infrastructure. The focus during the early part of the 2000s has shifted to the European Community. Dramatic changes have been made in Europe’s formerly communist countries, and the shift in 2002 to the euro as a common currency has added economic strength to the European Union. Spain, Portugal, and Argentina likewise have taken advantage of

this growing economic reality. With the passing of NAFTA in the mid 1990s, and the changing political climate, Mexico is becoming a recognized economic partner with America and Canada. But that union has also presented its cultural challenges to the United States as legal and illegal immigrants have flooded the southern states.

Who will emerge as the dynamic economic players in the first decade of this millennium? Perhaps it will be China or India, with their huge populations to increase their influence. Or maybe even Russia, as its economy stabilizes and its manufacturers begin to focus on quality products and customer satisfaction. The future is unclear.

As important as these countries and regions are in their influence on American business, equally important will be the ability of Americans to conduct business across cultures. Unfortunately, few Americans are prepared for such cross-cultural activity.

Many major American companies misjudge foreign business partners or distant markets. All too often, Americans seem to rush insensitively into unknown cultures only to make major business and social mistakes. An understanding of some of the dimensions of cross-cultural communication may better prepare Americans with the skills needed to conduct international business.

Chapel addressed this issue in his study of ways to improve international management communication. For those who want to be effective international communicators a three-prong cognitive process is required: (1) acquire cultural awareness and understanding; (2) develop both an abstract and usable knowledge of language (verbal and nonverbal); and (3) create a motivation to use cultural awareness for the development of global business relationships. This happens as managers become acculturated within their own native society, and as they seek to develop an awareness of the reality, validity, and distinctiveness of other cultural values and norms.⁶⁸

Cultural Awareness

The work of Ronen and Victor argues that real failure in the international business arena frequently results from the inability of people to understand their lack of desire to interact with those in diverse cultures. This is more prevalent than the lack of technical or professional skills.⁶⁹

In international business people of different cultures have difficulty communicating effectively without some caring and appreciation of each other's points of view, values, and goals. If individuals do not attempt to develop this awareness, stereotyping of people, information, and behavior takes place. This eventually can lead to systematic discrimination. Examples of this process became rapidly apparent following the September 11, 2001, terrorists' attacks on America. Peoples of Arab decent and Muslim faith were suddenly lumped together and stereotyped as "the enemy," which led to racial and ethnic profiling. Members of those groups were targeted even if they were U.S. citizens.

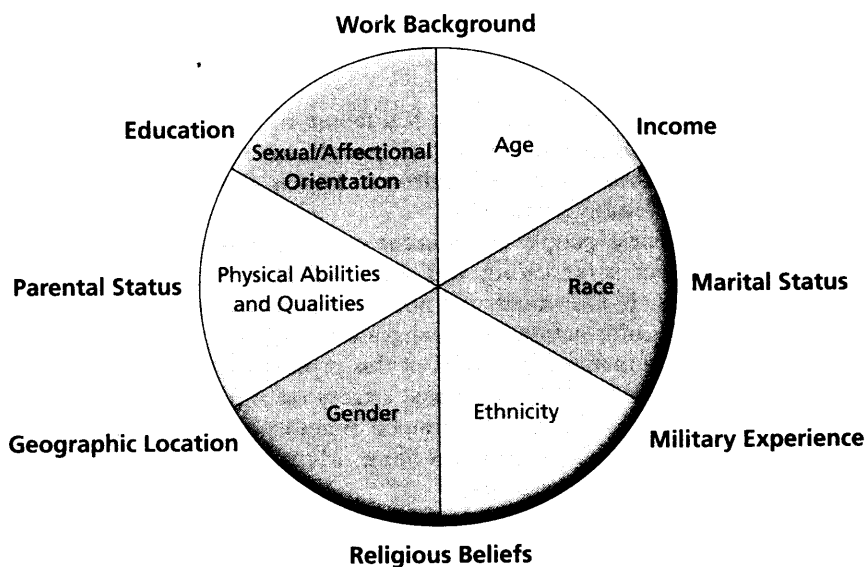
Associated with cross-cultural communication is the rapidly emerging role of cultural diversity awareness in the workplace. In 2000, white males moved closer to becoming a minority in the U.S. workplace; the customer base changed dramatically to incorporate people of all nationalities and ethnicities.⁷⁰ Rather than encouraging

the cultural melting pot of just a few generations ago, in which workers tried to lose their accents, Americanized their names, or dressed like other Americans, today pride of background, language, and culture is respected. We are learning that differences are strengths. Extensive effort is under way researching and documenting ways to enhance the perception of cultural diversity, and developing training programs that promote it.⁷¹ Figure 1.3 illustrates the dimensions of diversity.

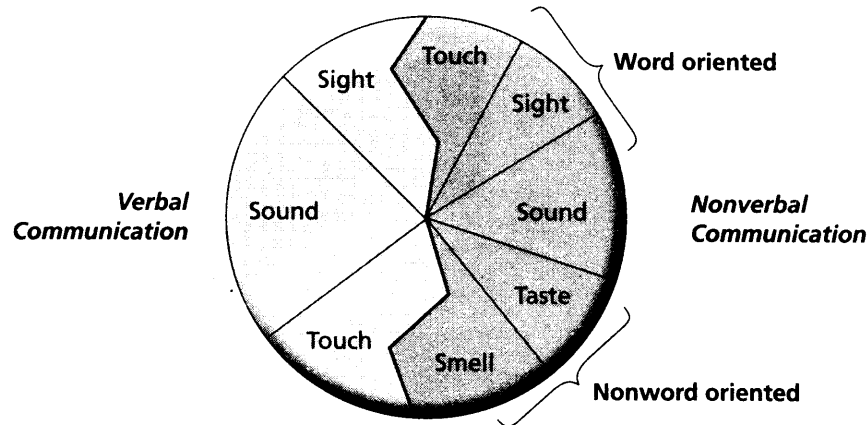
Reading about and researching other cultures can enhance cultural awareness. But interactions among peoples of ethnic and social diversity in the domestic workforce produce a greater understanding. This awareness is especially apparent in communication transactions where the dynamic interrelatedness of culture, language, and cognition allow for better understanding and less ambiguity of meaning.⁷²

All communication is either verbal or nonverbal. Verbal communication consists of sharing thoughts through the meanings of words, while nonverbal communication shares thoughts through all other means. Some nonverbal communication is associated with the delivery of words and some is not (see Figure 1.4). While the understanding of verbal and nonverbal communication and the interplay between them is essential among businesspeople who share the culture of the United States, it is even more important with cross-cultural communications because of the influences of religion, etiquette, customs, and politics. These four influences mediate communication far beyond mere language differences. Few topics can bring about such heated discussions as can religion; alienation can occur if the rules of etiquette are not observed; every person defends his or her own customs against all others;

Figure 1.3 **Dimensions of Diversity**



Source: Berkshire Associates, Inc. <http://www.berkshire-app.com/> (1995).



and disagreements over politics can start wars. These four influences surround and dictate the international business setting (see Figure 1.5).

While the extensive review of different countries' religions, etiquettes, customs, and politics is outside the purview of this text, examples of how they affect some of the major verbal and nonverbal communication activities illuminates how much preparation is required before entering into an international business transaction.

Verbal Communication

Within verbal communication, four areas deserve attention: jargon and slang, acronyms, humor, and vocabulary and grammar.⁷³ English is rich in colorful but American-based cultural phrases, such as “in the ballpark,” “raining cats and dogs,” and “put in your two cents’ worth.” Jargon has more of a business orientation, but still has phrases unique to American culture, such as “the bottom line” or delivering a “dog and pony show.” Even though the words may translate directly into another language, the meanings often do not. Avoid jargon and slang.

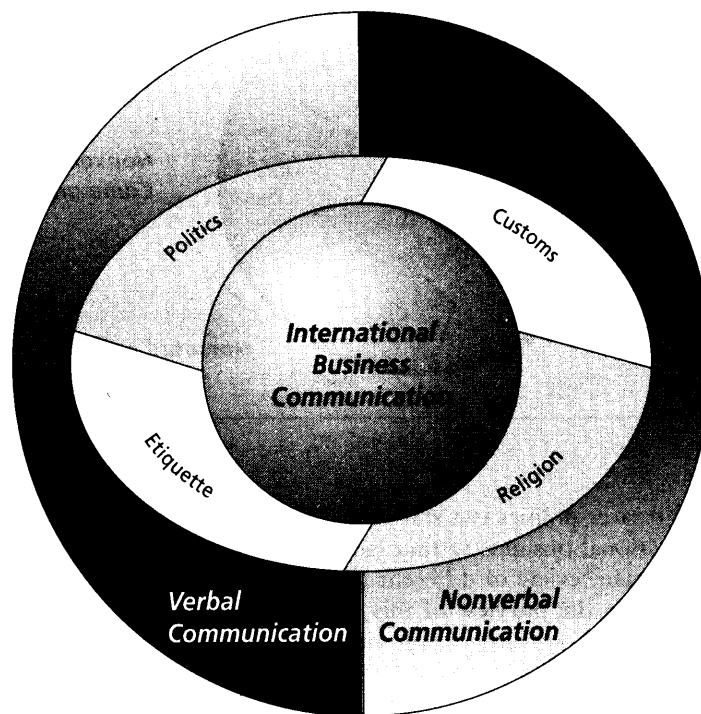
Acronyms—the initial letters of a series of words—also should be avoided. People from other countries may be unfamiliar even with such common American acronyms as CEO, R&D, or VP. Use the full version the first time, and perhaps each time.

A third area of verbal difficulty is humor. Clearly, what is defined as humor varies dramatically across cultures. Americans often stereotype British humor as understated and dry or perceive Asians as sharing little humor. Conversely, many non-Americans view American humor as coarse and heavy-handed. Because of the serious threat of damaging an otherwise potentially viable business setting with inappropriate humor, the American businessperson is advised to avoid initiating humor.

Help your reader or listener by using your best grammar and by writing with accepted punctuation. English is often the language of business, but not all foreign businesspeople are adequately prepared to handle faulty communication. Since

Figure 1.5

The Relationships of International Business Communication and Verbal and Nonverbal Communication



written punctuation carries rules for how to speak, you should speak your punctuation. Hesitate at commas, and speak in complete sentences. Select a tone that is not condescending, but rather appropriately businesslike.

Nonverbal Communication

Historically, we have emphasized the verbal aspects of intercultural communication, and have minimized the nonverbal components. Burgoon strongly argues the need to integrate verbal and nonverbal communication for more effective intercultural relationships.⁷⁴

While some important elements of nonverbal communication—such as subtle voice intonations, slight facial expression changes, or flamboyant clothing—have relatively clear meanings to us, the meaning may be missed or misinterpreted in other countries. Some of the areas of nonverbal communication that can be misused are color, time, distance, voice, body movements, and clothing.

Many assume that the impression or image associated with certain colors crosses cultural boundaries. Actually, the interpretation of colors varies extensively. For

example, while red means danger to us, it may be associated with festive occasions in China; mourning is symbolized by black in our culture but by yellow in the Philippines.

The American use of time is not universal either. We tend to set and respect deadlines and appointments. However, Latin Americans, for example, do not feel as compelled to stick to time schedules. Efforts to impose our standards of time on others can elicit opposition or anger.

The spatial relationships among people in the United States are approximately in the middle of a spectrum of behavior for other countries. For example, our speaking distance in business settings is typically about two feet; this distance would generally be too close for the British and too distant for those from the Middle East.

The voice—even as it delivers English that is to be translated into another language—carries meaning. From the viewpoint of those from many cultures, Americans tend to speak too loudly and too much. They often do not give adequate time for a reply and fill uncomfortable silences with words. In some cultures, such as the Japanese, silence is not negative, but rather may be a time for introspection. In some countries, the custom may allow men to speak loudly and in a gruff voice, and women—if they speak in business settings at all—are to sound quiet, reserved, and perhaps childlike. Indeed, attitudes toward women in business across cultures, for vocal and other reasons, can vary dramatically.⁷⁵

The various body movements that are comfortable to us may be inappropriate in other settings. Normal social gestures in the United States, such as the way we cross our legs, may be offensive elsewhere. We tend to look a speaker in the eyes, perceiving the action to be one of openness and honesty. In another country, such conduct may be interpreted as far too aggressive.

American business attire is widely defined even in the United States, where we stereotype the appearance of such professionals as bankers, advertisers, accountants, or artists. Even those stereotypes may be hazardous when we encounter “business casual.” When we wear our usual clothing in another country, we may find the colors too flamboyant, the weight uncomfortable for local conditions, or the length of a skirt or the absence of sleeves noticeably incorrect.

Given these pitfalls of cross-cultural communication, how can you prepare for international business? The answer lies in these steps:

- Undertake thorough and unhurried research and preparation;
- Maintain a nonjudgmental mind open to new ideas;
- Cultivate a desire to achieve maximum understanding and complete communication; and
- Avoid assuming that the U.S. culture is the only correct or dominant one.

Communication Apprehension

Many of us fear communicating and communication media. For example, some of us merely dislike or tolerate the task of writing; others hate or fear it. As the fear of communicating exceeds the perceived gain, individuals avoid communicating. Further, research suggests that those who are highly apprehensive about communication are likely to avoid jobs calling for high communication interaction or will

be unhappy if forced into such jobs. Those with such fears appear to select communication channels perceived to be the least threatening.⁷⁶

Public speaking can produce high anxiety. A recent study finds 96 percent of executives express some public speaking anxiety. “But among women, 35 percent report a ‘high level’ of anxiety . . . compared with 11 percent of men.” The regularity of speaking is also a consideration. For those who only give occasional speeches: “42 percent of women report a ‘high’ level of anxiety, compared with only 15 percent of men.”⁷⁷

As the size of the audience grows, the fear may increase. Speaking in front of a group is our greatest fear, according to one survey—even outranking fears of height, insects, financial problems, and deep water.⁷⁸ As might be guessed, communication apprehension can adversely affect organizational efficiency and attainment of personal goals.

An area related to apprehension is electronically mediated communication. On encountering some of the complex, challenging communication technologies, such as computers or two-way video teleconferencing, some of us modify the message or our delivery or we seek alternative media. We may avoid new technologies because we are unfamiliar with them or because we are afraid of embarrassment over incorrect use. Indeed, some of us avoid such commonplace business media as telephones and answering machines. Others cringe at the idea of delivering a computerized slide show rich with builds, transitions, and audio and video clips.

Training and experience can help overcome the fear of speaking. Chapter 3 demonstrates the ease with which one can prepare computerized slide shows. Chapter 14 discusses ways of overcoming the fears that arise in various business situations, such as being your company’s spokesperson to the press.

Advanced Communication

Thus far, you have seen evidence of the importance of communication in business. The research, for the most part, has focused on the advanced businessperson rather than the entry-level person. Going to work for a business organization with your advanced education, you may start as a mid-level manager. Your aspirations, no doubt, will be for advancement through the hierarchy. What communication skills will you need immediately and what skills will be needed later in your career? Figure 1.6 presents some answers to these two questions.

Hierarchical business communication has five stages. At the entry level, minimal skills beyond accepted grammar and punctuation are needed or expected; literacy is assumed. Communication is generally directed toward peers and upward, toward immediate supervisors. Messages may be complex and detailed but the audience, both immediate and ultimate, is small. In formal communications, the audience may be limited to a single supervisor.

The second level is the supervisory level, which requires entry-level skills plus the ability to organize sentences, paragraphs, and messages for coherence. Spoken communication, which may be relied upon heavily, is usually one-to-one or one-to-a-few. A substantial portion of the supervisor’s formal communication is directed downward and is on relatively few topics.

Middle managers build on the communication skills that exist at the lower levels. For these middle managers, written communication may increase in importance, be

Figure 1.6 The Five Stages of Executive Communication

Stages	Characteristics	Importance of Language Rules	Message Complexity	Audience Size	Exposure to Subordinates	Breadth of Topics
5. Top Management	Communication at top levels with other executives; comfortable with large groups and media; compelling writer and speaker.					
4. Upper Management	Effective with outside exposure (i.e., luncheon talks, reports, company spokesperson) and internally (i.e., newsletters, union negotiations).					
3. Middle Management	Effective with common business media (i.e., letters, memos, staff meetings).					
2. Supervisors	Can organize sentences, paragraphs, and messages for coherence.					
1. Entry Level	Has basic spelling, grammar, and pronunciation skills.					

of a routine nature, and flow both upward and downward. Middle managers may experience more of a balance between what is sent and what is received than personnel at lower levels of the organization. Those at lower levels tend to receive more information than they initiate. Communication is important for middle managers because they must be quite adaptable. They must be capable of transmitting clear directions to supervisors, perhaps with a motivational or authoritarian tone, and also of responding concisely to messages from the upper levels. Yet another set of skills may be called on for communication with peers, with whom they share ideas, work, and social occasions. The audiences of middle managers range from a variety of superiors to peers and supervisors; these audiences receive a diversity of messages from middle managers.

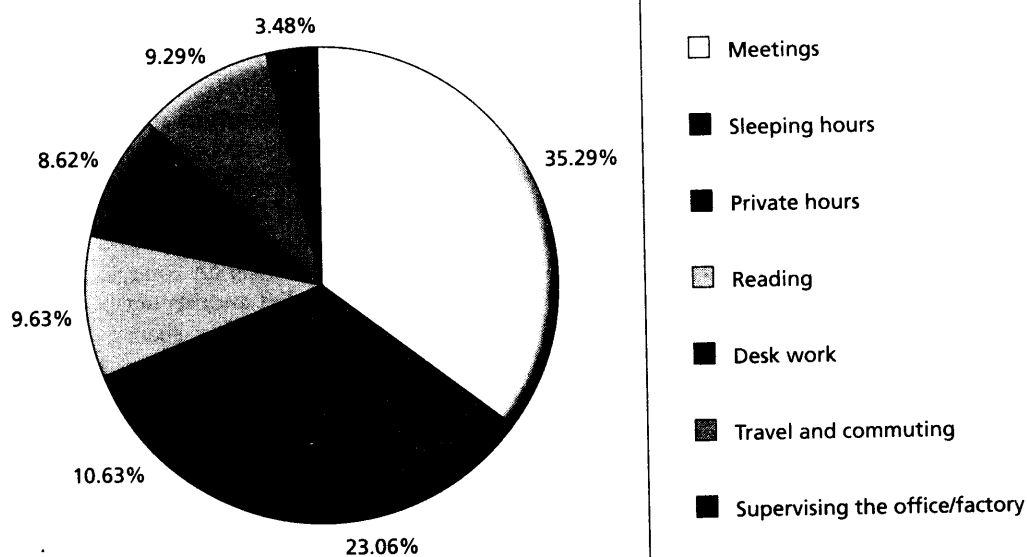
For the upper manager, audience size increases. The upper manager is called on to represent the organization as a speaker at community group meetings and may be a leader in church or civic groups, such as the Rotary Club. Internally, the upper manager has control over the final appearance of many written documents, such as reports or newsletters, which often are largely prepared by subordinates. This manager edits weak communication and appreciates clear communication. Writing prepared at lower levels may feel the heavy pencil of the upper manager. Clarity and precision often characterize this manager's communication style. The

upper manager may prepare communications for top management, such as written speeches or reports to a board of directors. Top management will assess the quality of the upper manager's communication abilities as it determines future assignments.

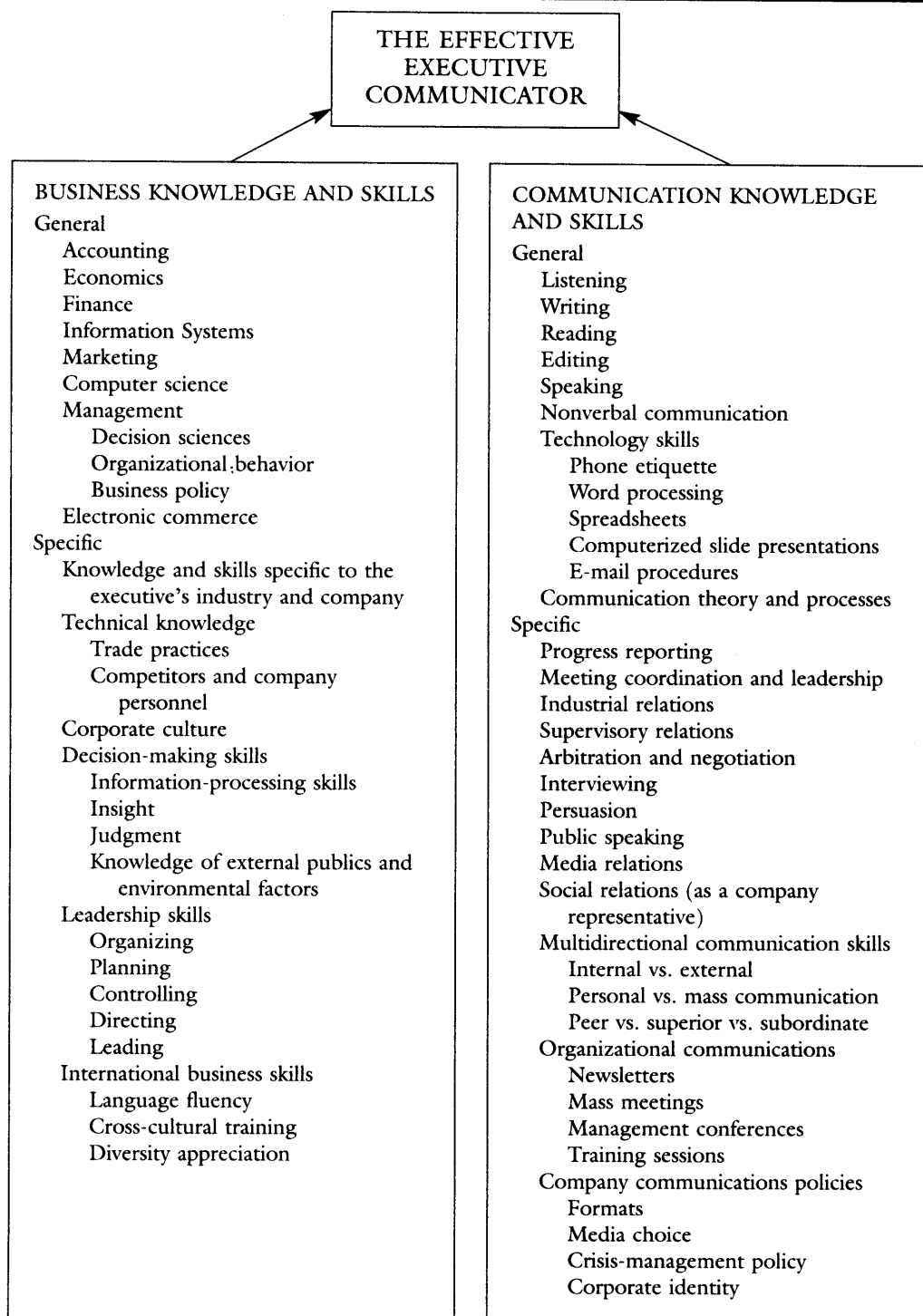
Top managers spend much of their time communicating with their peers. They often present terse, clear, goal-oriented messages to large audiences at one time, such as in annual reports, commencement addresses, or media interviews. Usually, the message is less complex than communications at lower levels in order to make the information more easily understood by many levels of the organization and by the public. Topics are broad and are often a synthesis of information that has moved up the organization or from outside. Communicators at this level tend to be more cautious about what they say because the message often affects many people. Top managers also will communicate to a substantial degree with subordinates, usually at a level or two below. The top manager's communication may be directive or persuasive. This manager often has extraordinary leadership skills, is charismatic, and engenders intense loyalty. See Figure 1.7 for a breakdown of how one study found chief executive officers (CEOs) spent their contact time.

The effective executive communicator (at middle, upper, or top management) is the product not only of business knowledge and skills, but also of communication knowledge and skills. These knowledge and skill areas work in concert for the truly effective communicator. Figure 1.8 outlines some of the more important knowledge and skill areas and illustrates the important interactions between general and specific business and communication abilities.

Figure 1.7 How American CEOs Spend Their Time



Source: Hideyuki Kudo, Takeo Tachikawa, and Noriniko Suzuki, "How U.S. and Japanese CEOs Spend Their Time," *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 21, November 6, 1988, pp. 72-82.



Summary

Just as middle, peer, and top managers use communication skills that are different from those of supervisors and entry-level employees, advanced students have different communication needs than lower-level students.

Effective communication is crucial in business. Those who are effective communicators rise quickly in their organizations. Those without such abilities—even if they are functional experts—often are held back. Numerous studies support conclusions that communication—written, spoken, listening, and visual—should be an integral part of the college curriculum, can get you a job or a better job or a promotion, and can make you a better manager.

A good manager also observes and communicates ethical standards of behavior to employees. Ethical content and conduct were examined in this chapter, as were ethics and technology. New technology has made the process of electronic plagiarism and document modification easier. While these means are available, ethical communicators avoid dishonesty and seek to protect the rights of others.

Many people are unprepared to communicate at the international level or fear some forms of communication, such as public speaking or being televised. Because audience size and topic importance are likely to grow as a manager rises in the organizational hierarchy, overcoming communication apprehension while improving skills is important.

The chapters that follow are directed toward helping you sharpen the communication skills you use as a manager. Included in these skills are the understanding of the importance of visual support, effective writing of various business messages, polished speaking skills in a diversity of settings, the ability to select from media options to best accomplish your goals, and the ways to frame and analyze a business case in both the classroom and office. Whatever your situation now—student or manager—these chapters will help you become an advanced communicator.

Discussion Questions

1. The opening pages of this chapter describe five communication skills that research indicates to be critical for managerial success. How do you rate yourself on each skill? In what ways can you work to bring improvement to each skill?
2. Why do you think good communication skills increase a person's chance of being hired for a job, and in receiving promotions later in that job?
3. Communication documents often leave a telltale sign of unethical behavior in organizations. Describe how managers you know, or have recently read about, use communication while in the middle of an ethical dilemma.
4. As you search the Internet for material to use in your class assignments, what guidelines do you employ to ensure that you use your findings in an accurate and honest way? What materials do you consider to be in the "public domain" and free to copy at will? What materials do you consider to be protected and needing permission or reference to use?

5. In examining cross-cultural communication do you believe it is more important to acquire cultural awareness and understanding, to develop a knowledge of and use of language, or travel extensively?
6. Communication apprehension is something that each speaker has probably experienced to some degree. Describe your own level of anxiety as you prepare for individual and group presentations and written projects. How do you personally manage your apprehension? How have you observed others managing theirs?

Communication in Action

1. Your communication instructor recently stated that the business school dean at your college is leaning toward increasing the number of communication courses to be offered in your business school. It seems the dean is being "encouraged" by local community business folk and recent school alumni. Before any decision is made the dean also wants to hear from current students. Your instructor has asked you to send a memo to the dean. Prepare a short memo to the dean describing your belief that additional courses (and resources for those courses) are needed or are not needed. Be sure to support whichever stand you take with good rationale. If you do support an additional communication course, indicate the impact communication skills have on getting a job and being promoted in those jobs.



Internet

2. You have recently been hired into a new sales position with a medium-size company. Your first few weeks are being spent at the company's main office. There you are learning about the company's divisions, the products you will sell, and the territory you will cover. While the company has a great sales course, management has found it beneficial to outsource basic communication-skills training. The company will pay for one communication-skills seminar. This can be in the area of speaking, writing, or listening (or a combination of two or more). Your immediate manager asks you to do a Web search and to isolate several training companies that seem to have outstanding communication skills.
Your assignment. Using an Internet search engine, locate several Web sites of companies that offer communication-skills training. Compare the different sites according to three criteria: learning objectives, length of training time, and cost. Assemble your findings according to the criteria. Make a decision on the training program that excites you most. Send your manager (your instructor) an e-mail message that describes your findings and supports the program you would like to attend. Take the rest of your findings with you to class for discussion.
3. You work for a local trade association, which is a nonprofit organization. Your office is planning the large annual convention. Members will assemble from almost every state in the nation and about ten foreign countries.

Feedback from past conventions has faulted the association staff with nonverbally communicating messages that are contrary to what people are saying verbally. Your boss asks you to do some research on nonverbal communication and share it at the next staff meeting.

Your assignment. Do an Internet search on the topic of nonverbal communication. Put together an outline of your findings with at least six to eight major areas that you would want to cover in your staff presentation. One interesting nonprofit site has been prepared by Carter McNamara, <http://www.mapnp.org/library/>. When you arrive at the site, scroll through the "Free Management Library" listings. You will find a link to "Communications (Interpersonal)." In that file you will find links to search the pages that follow for information on nonverbal communication.

4. Your instructor has given a very serious lecture on e-plagiarism, and how it will not be tolerated in course assignments. To emphasize the seriousness of the issue the instructor gives an Internet assignment to research the issue. You have heard about a popular Web site, <http://www.magportal.com/>, which contains lots of magazine articles. You decide to sample it and look under the "business" area for articles on e-plagiarism. Examine several of the articles that are highlighted. Make a list of at least ten critical things that you will take back to class for a discussion on the topic, along with a bibliography listing the articles.



InfoTrac

5. American companies that are found guilty of breaking the law often pay large settlements. This occurred with Prudential Insurance Company a few years ago, when they agreed to pay a fine of \$35 million for misleading sales practices.

Your assignment. Use InfoTrac to locate an article on the Prudential case. The article, "Persuasion, Probity, and Paltering: The Prudential Crisis," by Betsy Stevens, was in *The Journal of Business Communication*, October 1999, Article No. A58082897. Read the article and answer the following questions:

- a. What role did communication play in the Prudential case?
- b. Were the ethical problems related to conduct or character issues? Were the ethical problems related to individual, organizational, or social ethics?
- c. Did Prudential address ethical behavior in any of its company documents?
- d. How did Prudential change its communication practices?

Notes

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