EXCELLENCE IN
BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION

13e

Communication Skills for Career Success

Define your professional promise

Write, speak, listen, negotiate, and collaborate

Communicate with confidence

Craft every kind of business message

Develop, adapt, and thrive in any position

Use communication technologies efficiently and effectively

Land the ideal job

JOHN V. THILL / COURTLAND L. BOVÉE

Practice, Engage, Apply and Develop Employability Skills with MyLab Business Communication

MyLab™ **Business Communication** is an online homework, tutorial, and assessment program constructed to work with this text to engage students and improve results. It was designed to help students develop and assess the skills and applicable knowledge that they will need to succeed in their courses and their future careers.

83%

of students said MyLab Business Communication helped them earn higher grades on homework, exams, or the course

*Source: 2016 Student Survey, n 138

See what more than 25,000 students had to say about MyLab Business Communication:

"MyLab Business Communication hits all the important parts of the chapters that you need to know to understand assignments, and discussions with your teacher and classmates."

— Business Communication Student, Seminole State College

Mini Sims put students in professional roles and give them the opportunity to apply course concepts and develop **decision-making skills** through real-world business challenges.
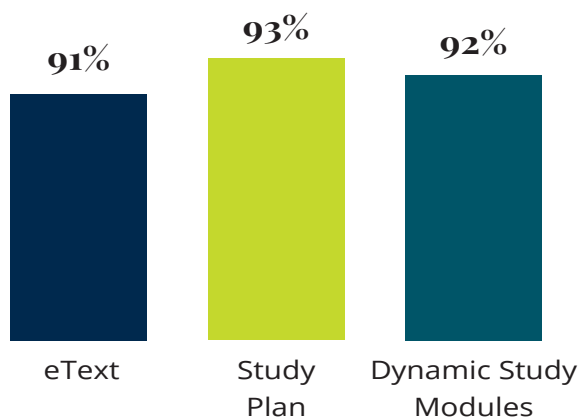

Pearson
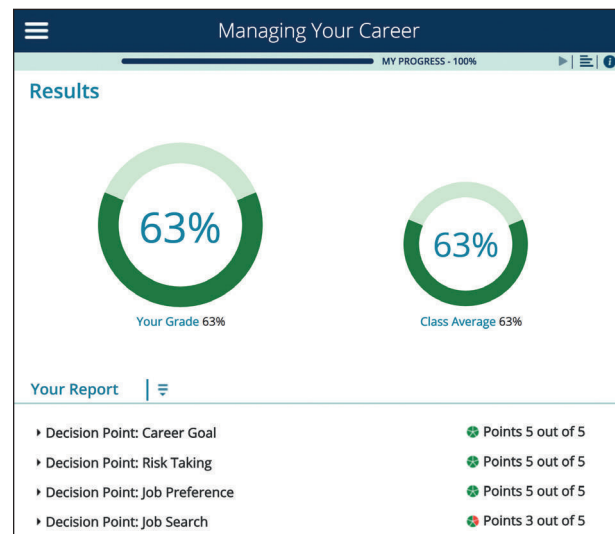
The Study Plan gives students personalized recommendations, practice opportunities, and **learning aids** to help them stay on track.

Video Exercises are available for select chapter topics to help engage students and hold them accountable for their learning.

"The simulations because they require thought process, the activity is fun and gets me engaged into the process and has real scenarios."
— Business Communication Student, Paul Luu, San Bernardino Valley College

% of students who found learning aids helpful

eText — 91%
Study Plan — 93%
Dynamic Study Modules — 92%

Dynamic Study Modules use the latest developments in cognitive science and help students study chapter topics by adapting to their performance in real time.

Pearson eText enhances student learning with engaging and interactive lecture and example videos that bring learning to life.

The **Gradebook** offers an easy way for you and your students to see their performance in your course.

85%

of students would tell their instructor to keep using MyLab Business Communication

For additional details visit: www.pearson.com/mylab/businesscommunication

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THIRTEENTH EDITION

Excellence in Business Communication

John V. Thill

CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
GLOBAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Courtland L. Bovée

PROFESSOR OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION
C. ALLEN PAUL DISTINGUISHED CHAIR
GROSSMONT COLLEGE

P Pearson

Pearson

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Preface

New to This Edition

MORE VALUABLE THAN EVER WITH NEW STUDENT-FOCUSED FEATURES

- **Build Your Career** activities help students create their employment-communication packages throughout the course, so they're ready to apply for jobs by the end of the course.
- **Apply Your Skills Now** highlight boxes help students apply their newly developing communication skills in other classes and in their personal lives.
- **Five-Minute Guides** serve as handy reminders of the steps needed to accomplish a variety of fundamental communication tasks, from resolving workplace conflict to writing business email to planning reports and presentations.

DOUBLE THE COVERAGE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Excellence in Business Communication now has two chapters devoted to these important topics: listening, nonverbal communication, conversational skills, conflict resolution, negotiation, teamwork, collaborative communication, meeting skills, and business etiquette. (To keep the text at 16 chapters and a similar page count as the previous edition, the three chapters on report writing have been streamlined to two chapters.)

THE ONLY TEXT THAT COVERS *INTELLIGENT COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY*

The digital transformation sweeping through business is creating a host of new communication tools and techniques that students will encounter during their job searches and in the workplace. A new four-page visual feature, "Empowering Communicators with Intelligent Communication Technology," shows 15 applications of artificial intelligence and smart technology. New highlight boxes take a close look at innovations ranging from augmented writing tools to résumé bots.

EXTENSIVE CONTENT ENHANCEMENTS

All new *On the Job* vignette/simulation pairs. These chapter-opening vignettes and end-of-chapter simulations show students how professionals apply the same skills they are reading about in the chapter. All 16 are new in this edition.

Nearly 70 new figures. The Thirteenth Edition has 71 annotated model documents, 31 examples of mobile communication in business communication, 16 examples of social media, and 15 examples of intelligent communication technology.

Revised annotations in model document before/after pairs. These revised notes make it easier for students to see the specific changes made to transform ineffective messages into effective ones.

Nearly 300 new questions and student activities. Every chapter has fresh project ideas and evaluation questions.

Streamlined coverage of report writing and production. To maintain the 16-chapter structure after the addition of a second chapter on interpersonal communication, the separate chapters on writing and completing reports have been merged into one chapter.
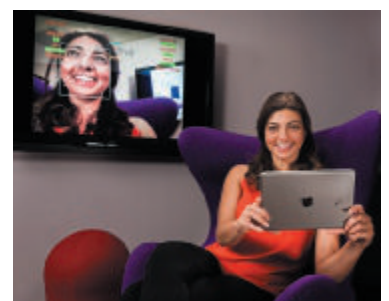
Numerous revisions and updates. Dozens of chapter sections are new, updated, or substantially revised to reflect the latest research and practices in business communication:
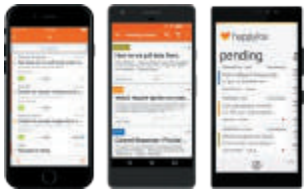
Understanding What Employers Expect from You

How Audiences Receive Messages

How Audiences Decode Messages

The Social Communication Model

The Potential Benefits of Communication Technology

The Spectrum of Contemporary Communication Technology

Social and Workgroup Communication Systems

Mobile Communication

Intelligent Communication Technology

Committing to Ethical and Legal Communication

Forms of Unethical Communication

Plagiarizing

Ensuring Ethical Communication

Improving Your Listening Skills

Understanding Why Listening Is Such a Complex Process

The Unique Challenges of Listening

Choices and Behaviors That Affect Listening Quality

Minimize the Barriers to Effective Listening

Improving Your Nonverbal Communication Skills

Developing Your Conversational Skills

Initiating Business Conversations

Maintaining a Positive Conversational Flow

Gracefully Concluding a Conversation

Handling Difficult Conversations

Managing Workplace Conflict

Why Conflict Arises in the Workplace

Steps to Resolve Conflict

Developing Your Skills as a Negotiator

Understanding the Principles of Negotiation

Preparing for a Negotiation

Engaging in Negotiation

Types of Teams

Characteristics of Effective Teams

Team Roles

Stages of Team Development

Benefits and Challenges of Virtual Teamwork

Tips for Success in Virtual Team Environments

Collaboration Arrangements

Writer-Editor Relationships

Full Collaboration

Collaboration Systems

AI-Enabled Collaboration

Conducting Virtual Meetings

Business Etiquette in the Workplace

Age Differences

Gender Differences

Factors to Consider When Choosing Media and Channels

Choosing Between Direct and Indirect Approaches

Building Reader Interest with Storytelling Techniques

Using Words Correctly

The Emoji Question—Overcoming the Limitations of Lean Media

The Rise of Emojis

To Emoji or Not: Two Dilemmas

Using Emoticons and Emojis Effectively

Categories of Social Platforms

Business Communication Uses of Social Platforms

Communication Strategies for Business Social Networking

The Email Subject Line: Persuading People to Open Your Messages

Business Messaging

Categories of Business Messaging

Tips for Successful Messaging

Blogging

Business Applications of Microblogging

Tips for Effective Business Tweets

Podcasting

Asking for Recommendations

Writing Instructions

Refusing Requests for Recommendations and References

Giving Negative Performance Reviews

Terminating Employment

Using the Three-Step Writing Process for Persuasive Messages

Balancing the Three Types of Persuasive Appeals

Maintaining High Standards of Ethics, Legal Compliance, and Etiquette

Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing Information

Ensuring Successful Team Presentations

Planning a Team Presentation

Rehearsing and Delivering a Team Presentation

Addressing Areas of Concern (under Planning Your Résumé)

Keeping Your Résumé Honest

References

Building an Effective LinkedIn Profile

Writing Application Letters

Understanding the Interviewing Process

The Screening Stage

The Selection Stage

Structured Versus Unstructured Interviews

Behavioral Interview Questions

Case Interviews and Take-Home Assessments

Interviewing by Phone

Interviewing by Video

Preemployment Testing and Background Checks

Solving Teaching and Learning Challenges

Communication is the most valuable skill that graduates can bring into the workforce, but it is one of the most challenging to teach. *Excellence in Business Communication* blends the timeless fundamentals of communication with contemporary media skills and contemporary business practices. To help students succeed from their first day on the job, *Excellence in Business Communication* presents the full range of on-the-job skills that today's communicators need, from writing conventional printed reports to using the latest digital, social, mobile, and visual media.

Each chapter opens with a brief vignette that describes a challenge or opportunity faced by a business professional, emphasizing concepts and valuable skills that students will explore in the chapter.

ON THE JOB: COMMUNICATING AT
STITCH FIX

The Never-Ending Need to Persuade

Katrina Lake's path to entrepreneurship didn't start with the stereotypical urge to create a company. In fact, she kept waiting for someone else to create the company she had in mind so she could buy from it and invest in it. During the first two phases of her career, in a retail consulting firm and then a venture capital firm, she kept looking for someone to solve what she believed was the central problem of online fashion retailing: "How can we marry the ease of shopping online with what people want in clothes, which is really about fit and style?"

After waiting for someone else to pitch the right idea to her in the hopes of getting investment capital, she decided to launch it herself. She went back to school to pursue an MBA at Harvard, where her idea began to take real shape and Stitch Fix was born. The concept was a clothing retailer that would combine the convenience of online shopping with the individual touch of the stylists and personal shoppers available in higher-end shops and department stores. Customers could receive a small selection of items chosen by a personal stylist (with the help of some powerful artificial intelligence), then buy what they like and send back what they don't.

Lake believed in the idea from the outset, but the need to persuade others to believe in it began early and has been an
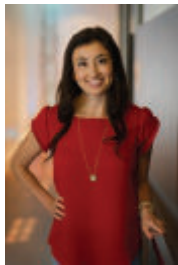
Stitch Fix cofounder and CEO Katrina Lake relied heavily on persuasive communication skills to secure funding and attract top talent to her start-up company.

ON THE JOB: SOLVING COMMUNICATION DILEMMAS AT **STITCH FIX**

You've joined Stitch Fix as a training and quality lead. You report to the supervisor of training and quality programs and lead a small team of specialists who help employees throughout the company deliver a satisfying customer experience. Use what you've learned in this chapter to address these challenges.

1. Stitch Fix emphasizes the "art of conversation" with its trainers and customer experience staff. You recently heard about a conversational training system that uses natural language processi... appears to be adv... versations with cus... be a great way to t... cost-effective than... and it can be prog... versation to give a... most. There would...

should you balance the emotional and logical appeals in your message?

a. The appeal should be primarily logical in order to emphasize the business benefits of the new training approach. However, add the emotional appeal of making life easier for employees by reducing disruption to their schedules.

b. Conversing with a software robot is unavoidably going to be an emotional experience, so the proposal should match that...

The chapter-opening story is picked up again at the end of the chapter in a unique simulation that has students imagine themselves in that company as they face four communication challenges that require them to use their new skills and insights.

Annotated model documents are perhaps the most important feature of a business communication text, and *Excellence in Business Communication* is packed with a balance of carefully chosen examples from real companies and original material created to illustrate specific concepts.

Fridman highlights her experience with specific areas of expertise, beginning with points likely to be of greatest interest to prospective clients.

Academic credentials enhance her credibility by letting readers know she not only attended a respected university but now teaches at one, too.

Professional credentials convey the message that she meets rigorous standards of knowledge, experience, and ethical performance.

Mentioning her charitable work further builds her credibility (as president of the organization) and promotes a positive reaction from readers.

A high-quality photograph (well lit, with no background distractions) also conveys the message of professionalism.

JOLI FRIDMAN, CFP®, CPA

To improve student results, we recommend pairing this text with **MyLab Business Communication**, which is the teaching and learning platform that empowers you to reach every student. By combining trusted author content with digital tools and a flexible platform, MyLab personalizes the learning experience and will help your students learn and retain key course concepts while developing skills that future employers are seeking in their candidates.

Mini Sims—Real-world simulations that put students in professional roles and give them the opportunity to apply course concepts and develop decision-making skills through real-world business challenges.

These **branching** Mini Sims strengthen a student's ability to think critically, help students understand the impact of their decisions, engage students in active learning, and provide students with immediate feedback on their decisions.

Each decision point remediates to the Learning Objective in the eText.

Chapter Warm-Ups

Assessment helps you hold your students accountable for **READING** and demonstrating their knowledge of key concepts in each chapter before coming to class.

Chapter Quiz

Every chapter has quizzes written by our authors so you can assess your students' understanding of chapter learning objectives.

Five-Minute Guide to Resolving Workplace Conflict

Whenever you are
resolution.

`00:01`   De
1.
2.
3.

`00:02`   Ex
1.
2.
3.

`00:03`   Ide
1.

2.

Five-Minute Guide to Planning a Business Message or Document

Get every writin
reviewing these
fill in the missing

`00:01`

`00:02`

`00:03`

Five-Minute Guide to Better Business Email

Whenever you sit down to write an important email message, spend five minutes previewing the task to make sure you're ready to get started. Then you can use this guide to work your way through each step of the process.

`00:01`   **Plan the message**
1. Make sure email is the best medium/channel option.
2. Analyze the situation: Who is your audience, and what is your purpose?
3. Identify the information you'll need in order to accomplish your purpose.
4. Choose the direct or indirect approach. Can you open with the main idea, or do you need to build up to it indirectly?

`00:02`   **Draft the message**
1. Unless you are sending short and simple m
   but professional style, with complete sente
2. Make your content easy to skim and easy
3. Use bulleted or numbered lists to break ou
4. Clarify how you would like the recipient to
   expect.

`00:03`   **Craft a compelling subject line**
1. For routine communication with audiences
   and concise description of the message's
2. However, if the recipient might ignore your message or delay opening it, you need to get creative:

Student-Friendly Features

With multiple quick-reference tables and new Five-Minute Guides, the text serves as a valuable resource that students can use in other courses and take with them on the job.

COMPOSITIONAL MODES FOR DIGITAL MEDIA

As you practice using digital media in this course, focus on the principles of social media communication and the fundamentals of planning, writing, and completing messages, rather than on the specific details of any one medium or system.[2] Fortunately, the basic communication skills required usually transfer from one system to another. You can succeed with written communication in virtually all digital media by using one of nine *compositional modes*:

- **Conversations.** Although they take place via writing, some forms
  munication function more like real-time conversations than the sh
  documents. Much of Chapter 2's advice on conversations apply to t
  and the section on business messaging (see page 233) explores this
  ever-expanding communication format.
- **Comments and critiques.** One of the most powerful aspects of so
  opportunity for interested parties to express opinions and provide fee
  it's leaving comments on a blog post or reviewing products on an e
  Sharing helpful tips and insightful commentary is also a great way to
  sonal brand. To be an effective commenter, focus on short chunks of i
  a broad spectrum of other site visitors will find helpful. And even if
  criticism, keep it constructive. Angry rants and insults won't help a
  brand you as unprofessional.
- **Orientations.** The ability to help people find their way through an u
  or subject is a valuable writing skill and a talent that readers greatly ap
  summaries (see next item), orientations don't give away the key poi
  tion of information, but rather tell readers where to find those points.
  orientations can be a delicate balancing act because you need to know
  enough to guide others through it while being able to step back and view it from the
  inexperienced perspective of a "newbie."
- **Summaries.** At the beginning of an article or webpage, a summary functions as a
  miniature version of the material, giving readers all the key points while skipping over
  details (see Figure 8.1). At the end of an article or webpage, a summary functions as a
  review, reminding readers of the key points they've just read.

Original Coverage

Going beyond covering the tried-and-true, Bovée and Thill make unique contributions to the pedagogy and practice of business communication, such as the nine compositional modes required to succeed with digital and social media.

1 Plan →	2 Write →	3 Complete
Analyze the Situation Define your purpose and develop an audience profile.	**Adapt to Your Audience** Be sensitive to audience needs by using a "you" attitude, politeness, positive emphasis, and unbiased language. Build a strong relationship with your audience by establishing your credibility and projecting your company's preferred image. Control your style with a conversational tone, plain English, and appropriate voice.	**Revise the Message** Evaluate content and review readability; edit and rewrite for conciseness and clarity.
Gather Information Determine audience needs and obtain the information necessary to satisfy those needs.		**Produce the Message** Use effective design elements and suitable layout for a clean, professional appearance.
Choose Medium and Channel Identify the best combination for the situation, message, and audience.		**Proofread the Message**
Organize the Information Define your main idea, limit your scope, select the direct or indirect approach, and outline your content.	**Compose the Message** Choose strong words that you create effective senten coherent paragraphs.	

Reducing Stress and Uncertainty for Students

Students sometimes flounder when faced with unfamiliar or difficult writing challenges because they don't know how to move a project forward. By following the proven three-step process described in *Excellence in Business Communication*, they never have to feel lost or waste time figuring out what to do next.

No other textbook comes close to offering the valuable resources the authors provide students and instructors—many of which are available exclusively to Bovée and Thill adopters:

- The unique Real-Time Updates system extends the textbook with thousands of online media items that complement the text's coverage with fresh examples and valuable insights

- Sponsored instructor communities on LinkedIn and Facebook with nearly 2,000 members

- Tips and techniques in Bovée and Thill's Business Communication Blog and Twitter feed

- The Bovée & Thill channel on YouTube

- Business Communication Headline News

- Videos and PowerPoint presentations on SlideShare

- Hundreds of infographics, videos, articles, podcasts, and PowerPoints in the Business Communication Pictorial Gallery on Pinterest

- The Ultimate Guide to Resources for Teaching Business Communication

- Nine curated magazines for business communication on Scoop.it

Links to all these services and resources can be found at **blog.businesscommunicationnetwork.com/resources**.

REAL-TIME UPDATES
LEARN MORE BY READING THIS ARTICLE
Ten communication skills that will boost your career
Employers will sit up and take notice if you master these skills. Go to **real-timeupdates.com/ebc13** and select Learn More in the Students section.

Developing Employability Skills

In addition to helping students develop a full range of communication skills, *Excellence in Business Communication* will enhance a wide range of other skills that experts say are vital for success in the 21st-century workplace:

- **Critical thinking.** In many assignments and activities, students need to define and solve problems and make decisions or form judgments.
- **Collaboration.** Team-skills assignments provide multiple opportunities to work with classmates on reports, presentations, and other projects.
- **Knowledge application and analysis.** From the basic communication process to strategies for specific message types, students will learn a variety of concepts and apply that knowledge to a wide range of challenges.
- **Business ethics and social responsibility.** Ethical choices are stressed from the beginning of the book, and multiple projects encourage students to be mindful of the ethical implications that they could encounter in similar projects on the job.
- **Information technology skills.** Projects and activities in every chapter help students build skills with technology, including document preparation tools, online communication services, presentation software, and messaging systems.
- **Data literacy.** Report projects in particular present opportunities to fine-tune data literacy skills, including the ability to access, assess, interpret, manipulate, summarize, and communicate data.

Practice Your Skills

Exercises

Each activity is labeled according to the primary skill or skills you will need to use. To review relevant chapter content, you can refer to the indicated Learning Objective. In some instances, supporting information will be found in another chapter, as indicated.

2-6. **Interpersonal Communication: Listening Actively [LO-1]** For the next several days, take notes on your listening performance during at least a half-dozen situations in class, during social activities, and at work, if applicable. Referring to the traits of effective listeners in Table 2.4, rate yourself using *always, frequently, occasionally,* or *never* on these positive listening habits. In a report no longer than one page, summarize your analysis and identify specific areas in which you can improve your listening skills.

2-7. **Nonverbal Communication: Analyzing Nonverbal Signals [LO-2]** Select a business letter and envelope you have received at work or home. Analyze their appearance. What nonverbal messages do they send? Are these messages consistent with the content of the letter? If not, what could the sender have done to make the nonverbal communication consistent with the verbal communication? Summarize your findings in a post on your class blog or in an email message to your instructor.

Hundreds of realistic exercises, activities, and cases offer an array of opportunities for students to practice vital skills and put newfound knowledge to immediate use.

These resources are logically sorted by learning category, from conceptual recall to situational analysis to skill development.

To help instructors zero in on specific learning needs, activities are tagged in multiple ways, from media usage to team skills.

Cases

For all cases, feel free to use your creativity to make up any details you need in order to craft effective messages.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SKILLS

8-30. Media Skills: Social Networking; Compositional Modes: Summaries [LO-2] Many companies now have *voice of the customer (VoC)* programs to collect and analyze commentary and feedback from customers. The most comprehensive of these programs automatically gather data from social media, customer call records, technical support emails, online product reviews, and more. To extract insights from these large collections of text, marketers can use an intelligent communication technology called *text analytics*.

Your task: Review the text analytics information on the Clarabridge website at **www.clarabridge.com**. (The company refers to its technology as CX Analytics, for customer experience analytics.) Write a 100- to 150-word summary of this technology that Clarabridge could use as a post on its Facebook page to explain the capability to potential customers.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SKILLS

8-31. Media Skills: Social Networking; Online Etiquette [LO-2], Chapter 3 Employees who take pride in their work are a practically priceless resource for any business. However, pride can sometimes manifest itself in negative ways when employees come under criticism, and public criticism is a fact of life in social media. Imagine that your company has recently experienced a rash of product quality problems, and these problems have generated some unpleasant and occasionally unfair criticism on a variety of social media sites. Someone even set up a Facebook page specifically to give customers a place to vent one evening and discovered that two engineers in your company's product design lab have been responding to complaints on their own. They identified themselves as company employees and defended their product design, blaming the company's production department and even criticizing several customers for lacking the skills needed to use such a sophisticated product. Within a matter of minutes, you see their harsh comments being retweeted and reposted on multiple sites, only fueling the fire of negative feedback against your firm. Needless to say, you are horrified.

Your task: You manage to reach the engineers by private message and tell them to stop posting messages, but you realize you have a serious training issue on your hands. Write a post for the internal company blog that advises employees on how to respond appropriately when they are representing the company online. Use your imagination to make up any details you need.

NETWORKING SKILLS / TEAM SKILLS

8-32. Media Skills: Social Networking; Collaboration: Team Projects [LO-2], Chapter 3 Social media can be a great way to, well, socialize during your college years, but employers are increasingly checking up on the online activities of potential hires to avoid bringing in employees who may reflect poorly on the company.

Your task: Team up with another student and review each other's public presence on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, blogs, and any other website that an employer might check during the interview and recruiting process. Identify any photos, videos, messages, or other material that could raise a red flag when an employer is evaluating a job candidate. Write your teammate an email message that lists any risky material.

Instructor Teaching Resources

This program comes with the following teaching resources.

Supplements available to instructors at www.pearsonhighered.com	Features of the Supplement
Instructor's Manual	• Chapter overview • Chapter outline • Lecture notes organized by learning objective, with class discussion questions • Answers to highlight box questions • Answers to Apply Your Knowledge questions • Answers to Practice Your Skills activities • Solutions to cases (complete example solutions for short-message cases; solution guidelines for long-message cases) • Lesson plan foundations from the Bovée and Thill QuickSwitch textbook transition system
Test Bank authored by Susan Schanne from Eastern Michigan University	• 1,660 multiple-choice, true/false, and essay questions • Answer explanations • Keyed by learning objective • Classified according to difficulty level • Classified according to learning modality: conceptual, application, critical thinking, or synthesis • Learning outcomes identified • AACSB learning standard identified (Written and Oral Communication, Ethical Understanding and Reasoning, Analytical Thinking Skills, Information Technology, Interpersonal Relations and Teamwork, Diverse and Multicultural Work Environments, Reflective Thinking, and Application of Knowledge)
Computerized TestGen	TestGen allows instructors to • customize, save, and generate classroom tests. • edit, add, or delete questions from the Test Item Files. • analyze test results. • organize a database of tests and student results.
PowerPoints authored by Lauryn De George from University of Central Florida College of Business	Slides include all the graphs, tables, and equations in the textbook. PowerPoints meet accessibility standards for students with disabilities. Features include: • Keyboard and screen reader access • Alternative text for images • High contrast between background and foreground colors

About the Authors

Courtland L. Bovée and John V. Thill have been leading textbook authors for more than two decades, introducing millions of students to the fields of business and business communication. Their award-winning texts are distinguished by proven pedagogical features, extensive selections of contemporary case studies, hundreds of real-life examples, engaging writing, thorough research, and the unique integration of print and digital resources. Each new edition reflects the authors' commitment to continuous refinement and improvement, particularly in terms of modeling the latest practices in business and the use of technology.

Professor Bovée has 22 years of teaching experience at Grossmont College in San Diego, where he has received teaching honors and was accorded that institution's C. Allen Paul Distinguished Chair. Mr. Thill is a prominent communications consultant who has worked with organizations ranging from Fortune 500 multinationals to entrepreneurial start-ups. He formerly held positions with Pacific Bell and Texaco.

Courtland Bovée and John Thill were recently awarded proclamations from the Governor of Massachusetts for their lifelong contributions to education and for their commitment to the summer youth baseball program that is sponsored by the Boston Red Sox.

Court Bovée

Acknowledgments

The Thirteenth Edition of *Excellence in Business Communication* reflects the professional experience of a large team of contributors and advisors. We express our thanks to the many individuals whose valuable suggestions and constructive comments influenced the success of this book.

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Courtland L. Bovée

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the many thousands of instructors and students who use Bovée and Thill texts to develop career-enhancing skills in business communication. We appreciate the opportunity to play a role in your education, and we wish you the very best with your careers.

John V. Thill
Courtland L. Bovée

Prologue

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL CAREER WITH YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

One Course—Three Powerful Benefits

You will invest considerable time and energy in this course, so it's fair to ask what you will get in return. The simple answer: *a lot*. If you practice the techniques you'll discover here and use this opportunity to develop those techniques with your instructor's guidance, we're confident this course will help you in three important ways:

1. It will help you succeed in college.
2. It will help you conduct a more successful job search.
3. It will help you succeed in your first job so you can build a thriving career.

The following sections expand on this promise and offer valuable career-planning advice. Table 1 on the next page highlights the specific features of this book that can help you at every stage.

HOW THIS COURSE WILL HELP YOU

Take advantage of this opportunity to develop the single most important skill you'll need for a rewarding career: the ability to communicate. This textbook is desiged to help you in three valuable ways.

1. SUCCEED IN COLLEGE

Many of the skills you will learn in this course—writing, giving presentations, working in teams, resolving conflict, and more—can be applied in just about every course you take from now until graduation.

2. FIND THE RIGHT JOB

The entire job search process is really an extended exercise in communication, and the process gives you the chance to use your communication skills to stand apart from the competition.

3. LAUNCH YOUR CAREER

The bulk of this course is devoted to the communication and media skills you will need to use as soon as you enter (or reenter) the workforce. Succeed in your first job, and you'll be on your way to a rewarding career!

TABLE 1   Textbook Features to Help You at Every Stage of College and Career

	Textbook Feature	Stage 1: Succeeding in College		Stage 2: Conducting a Successful Job Search	Stage 3: Succeeding in Your First Job
		In This Course	In Other Courses		
Beginning of chapter	Learning Objectives	Use these to focus your study and review			
	On the Job vignette	See how the pros use chapter concepts		Get a sense of life on the job in various professions	
Within the chapter	Margin notes	Scan to get a quick review of the chapter			
	Real-Time Updates—Learn More (free media items)	Explore for additional insights			
	Figures	Study model documents to see what works and what doesn't	Study reports and other model documents to improve your writing	Use model letters and résumés to build your job search package	Use model documents to craft better documents on the job
	Mobile App highlights	Many of these apps can help with schoolwork	Many of these apps can help with schoolwork	Use selected apps to help in your job search	Use the apps on the job
	Checklists	Confirm understanding of each section	Use for a quick review if needed when writing	Use for a quick review if needed when writing	Use for a quick review if needed when writing
	Highlight boxes	*Apply Your Skills Now* helps you apply communication skills in and out of class	*Apply Your Skills Now* helps you apply communication skills in and out of class	*Developing as a Professional* gets you ready for the world of work	*Intelligent Communication Technology* and *Practicing Ethical Communication* prepare you for the job
End of chapter	Key Terms glossary	Quickly refer to important terms			
	Learning Objectives Checkup	Test your recall of chapter content			
	On the Job simulation	Follow through on the chapter-opening vignette by visualizing yourself on the job		Get a sense of life on the job in various professions	
	Apply Your Knowledge	Analyze communication scenarios to hone your insights			
	Practice Your Skills	Practice chapter skills in a variety of challenges			
	Expand Your Skills	Critique professional communication efforts and find career advice			
	Build Your Career	Use the exercise in each chapter to build your employment package		By the time you get to the employment chapters, you'll have a head start on your résumé package	Use these techniques to adjust your employment package as you progress
	Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage	Fine-tune the technical aspects of your writing	Fine-tune the technical aspects of your writing	Fine-tune the technical aspects of your writing	Fine-tune the technical aspects of your writing
	Cases (selected chapters)	Practice crafting professional-quality messages and documents		Use the *Portfolio Builder* cases to expand your employment portfolio	

	Textbook Feature	Stage 1: Succeeding in College		Stage 2: Conducting a Successful Job Search	Stage 3: Succeeding in Your First Job
		In This Course	In Other Courses		
	Five-Minute Guides (selected chapters)	Get quick reminders of how to accomplish important tasks	Use these for communication tasks in other classes, too	Use the guide in Chapter 15 to prepare and update your résumé	Download the PDFs and take them with you on the job
Online	Real-Time Updates	Subscribe online for weekly updates of free online media items			
	Student Assignments	Download files for selected chapters			
	Web Search	Use this metasearch engine to accelerate your research	Use for other classes for as long as your subscription is active		
	MyLab Business Communication	Use this optional online system for customized learning and more			

Stage 1: Succeeding in College

The first step in your career starts right now, with getting your degree and getting the most from all the courses you take between now and graduation. The communication skills you learn in this class can help you in virtually every other course. From brief homework assignments to complicated team projects to interactions with your professors, you will be able to communicate more effectively.

In addition to improving your communication effectiveness, this course will also improve your efficiency. Follow the writing process outlined in this book, and you can avoid the time-wasting uncertainty, dead ends, and rework that can make writing projects drag on forever.

Keep an eye out for the special highlight boxes titled "Apply Your Skills Now," which offer tips on using your new skills in all your college courses. Read these boxes and think about the situations in which you can apply the advice. If you need to have a difficult conversation with an instructor or resolve conflict in a project team, for example, these boxes can help. Many of these techniques can help you outside of the school environment, too, whenever you face communication challenges in any of your interpersonal relationships.

QUICK TIPS TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

Although this course explores a wide range of message types and appears to cover quite a lot of territory, the underlying structure of the course is rather simple. You'll learn a few basic concepts, identify the key skills to use and procedures to follow—and then practice, practice, practice. Whether you're writing a blog post in response to one of the real-company cases or drafting your own résumé, you'll be practicing the same fundamental skills in a variety of scenarios. With feedback and reinforcement from your instructor and your classmates, your confidence will grow and the work will become easier and more enjoyable.

Some of the assignments will involve business topics that may be new to you or somewhat less than exciting, but view them all as opportunities to hone your craft. Visualize yourself in each scenario and imagine that you are trying to convince a skeptical boss, calm an angry customer, or accomplish whatever task is assigned.

As you read each chapter, take time to study the examples and model documents (see Figure 1). This book offers dozens of realistic examples of business messages, many with notes along the sides that explain strong and weak points. Some are messages from real companies; others were created to show specific points about writing. Study these documents and any other examples your instructor provides. Learn what works and what doesn't, and then apply these lessons to your own writing.

Burgman includes enough of the original message to remind Williams why she is writing—but she doesn't clutter the screen with the entire original message.

By itemizing the steps she wants Williams to follow, she makes it easy for him to respond and helps ensure that the work will be done correctly.

Her email signature includes alternative contact information, making it easy for the recipient to reach her.

She opens with an informal salutation appropriate for communication between colleagues.

She includes the URL of the website she wants Williams to visit, so all he needs to do is click on or tap the link.

The warm complimentary close expresses her appreciation for his efforts.

Figure 1   **Learning from Model Documents and Messages**
You will find a wide variety of model documents and messages throughout the book, everything from tweets to formal reports. Study the notes in the margins to understand why specific writing techniques work (or don't work, in some cases), and apply these lessons to your own writing.

Along the way, learn from the feedback you get from your instructor and from other students. Don't take the criticism personally; your instructor and your classmates are commenting about the work, not about you. Always view feedback as an opportunity to improve.

QUICK TIPS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS IN ANY COURSE

For assignments in this or any other course, particularly major projects such as reports and presentations, follow these suggestions to produce better results with less effort:

- **Don't panic!** If the thought of writing a report or giving a speech sends a chill up your spine, you're not alone. Everybody feels that way when first learning business communication skills, and even experienced professionals can feel nervous about big projects. Keep three points in mind. First, every project can be broken down into a series of small, manageable tasks. Don't let a big project overwhelm you; it's nothing more than a bunch of smaller tasks. Second, remind yourself that you have the skills you need. As you move through the course, the assignments are carefully designed to match the skills you've developed up to that point. Third, if you feel panic creeping up on you, take a break and regain your perspective.
- **Focus on one task at a time.** Don't try to organize and express your ideas while simultaneously worrying about audience reactions, grammar, spelling, formatting, page design, and a dozen other factors. Fight the temptation to do everything at once. Trying to get everything perfect on the first pass will make the process slow and frustrating. In particular, don't worry too much about word choices or overall writing style during your first draft. Concentrate on the organization of your ideas first, then the best way to express those ideas, and then finally the presentation and production of your messages. Following the three-step writing process is an ideal way to focus on one task at a time in a logical sequence.

The techniques you will learn in this course will help you become a more successful writer, and they will make the process of writing easier and faster, too.

- **Give yourself plenty of time.** As with every other school project, waiting until the last minute creates unnecessary stress. Writing and speaking projects are much easier if you tackle them in small stages with breaks in between, rather than trying to get everything done in one frantic blast. Moreover, there will be instances when you simply get stuck on a project, and the best thing to do is walk away and give your mind a break. If you allow room for breaks in your schedule, you'll minimize the frustration and spend less time overall on your homework, too.
- **Step back and assess each project before you start.** The writing and speaking projects you'll have in this course cover a wide range of communication scenarios, and it's essential that you adapt your approach to each new challenge. Resist the urge to dive in and start writing without a plan. Ponder the assignment for a while, consider the various approaches you might take, and think carefully about your objectives before you start writing. Nothing is more frustrating than getting stuck halfway through because you're not sure what you're trying to say or you've wandered off track. Spend a little more time planning, and you'll spend a lot less time writing.
- **Use the three-step writing process.** Those essential planning tasks are the first step in the three-step writing process, which you'll learn about in Chapter 5 and use throughout the course. This process has been developed and refined by professional writers with decades of experience and thousands of projects ranging from short blog posts to 600-page textbooks. It works, so take advantage of it.

Stage 2: Conducting a Successful Job Search

Every activity in the job-search process relies on communication. The better you can communicate, the more successful you'll be at landing interesting and rewarding work. Plus, you can reduce the stress of preparing a résumé and going to job interviews.

Writing a résumé can be a big task, but you don't need to do it all at once if you give yourself plenty of time. The 16 Build Your Career activities (see the end of each chapter) show you how to build your job-search package one step at time. Do the activity in each chapter, and by the time you finish the book, you'll have the materials you need to start your job search.

Chapter 15 and Chapter 16 are dedicated to various forms of employment-related communication. If your course doesn't cover these chapters, your college probably offers a workshop or other activity to help you get ready to apply and interview for jobs. No matter where you learn the skills related to résumés and interviewing, this section will help you

think about the career you want to craft for yourself, with advice on finding the best fit, developing an employment portfolio, and defining your personal brand.

FINDING THE BEST FIT

Figuring out where and how you can thrive professionally is a lifelong quest. You don't need to have all the answers today, and your answers will no doubt change in the coming years. However, start thinking about it now so that you can bring some focus to your job search. Organize your strategic planning with three questions: what you want to do, what you have to offer, and how you can make yourself more valuable.

What Do You Want to Do?

Economic necessities and the dynamics of the marketplace will influence much of what happens in your career, and you may not always have the opportunity to do the kind of work you would really like to do. Even if you can't get the job you want right now, though, start your job search by examining your values and interests. Doing so will give you a better idea of where you want to be eventually, and you can use those insights to learn and grow your way toward that ideal situation. Consider these factors:

- **What would you like to do every day?** Research occupations that interest you. Find out what people really do every day. Ask friends, relatives, alumni from your school, and contacts in your social networks. Read interviews with people in various professions to get a sense of what their careers are like.
- **How would you like to work?** Consider how much independence you want on the job, how much variety you like, and whether you prefer to work with products, systems, people, ideas, words, figures, or some combination thereof.
- **How do your financial goals fit with your other priorities?** For instance, many high-paying jobs involve a lot of stress, sacrifices of time with family and friends, and frequent travel or relocation. If other factors—such as stability, location, lifestyle, or intriguing work—are more important to you, you may have to sacrifice some level of pay to achieve them.
- **Have you established some general career goals?** For example, do you want to pursue a career specialty such as finance or manufacturing, or do you want to gain experience in multiple areas with an eye toward general management or entrepreneurship?
- **What sort of work culture are you most comfortable with?** Would you be happy in a formal hierarchy with clear reporting relationships? Or do you prefer less structure? Teamwork or individualism? Do you prefer a competitive environment or a more cooperative culture?

The day-to-day activities of different professions can vary widely. Do as much research as you can before you choose a career path to make sure it's the right path for you.

You might need some time in the workforce to figure out what you really want to do, but it's never too early to start thinking about where you want to be. Filling out the assessment in Table 2 might help you get a clearer picture of the nature of the work you would like to pursue in your career.

What Do You Have to Offer?

Knowing what you want to do is one thing. Knowing what companies or clients are willing to pay you to do is another thing entirely. You may already have a good idea of what you can offer employers. If not, some brainstorming can help you identify your skills, interests, and characteristics. Start by listing achievements you're proud of and experiences that were satisfying, and identify the skills that enabled these achievements. For example, leadership skills, speaking ability, and artistic talent may have helped you coordinate a successful class project. As you analyze your achievements, you may begin to recognize a pattern of skills. Which of these would be valuable to potential employers?

TABLE 2   CAREER PLANNING SELF-ASSESSMENT

Activity or Situation	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	No Preference
1. I want to work independently.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. I want variety in my work.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. I want to work with people.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. I want to work with technology.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. I don't want to be stuck in an office all day.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. I want mentally challenging work.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. I want to work for a large organization.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. I want to work for a nonprofit organization.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. I want to work for a small business.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. I want to work for a service business.	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. I want to start or buy a business someday.	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. I want regular, predictable work hours.	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. I want to work in a city location.	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. I want to work in a small town or suburb.	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. I want to work in another country.	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. I want to work from home, even if I'm employed by someone else.	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. I want to work in a highly dynamic profession or industry, even if it's unstable at times.	_____	_____	_____	_____
18. I want as much career stability as possible.	_____	_____	_____	_____
19. I want to enjoy my work, even if that means making less money.	_____	_____	_____	_____
20. I want to become a high-level corporate manager.	_____	_____	_____	_____

Next, look at your educational preparation, work experience, and extracurricular activities. What do your knowledge and experience qualify you to do? What have you learned from volunteer work or class projects that could benefit you on the job? Have you held any offices, won any awards or scholarships, mastered a second language? What skills have you developed in nonbusiness situations that could transfer to a business position?

Take stock of your personal characteristics. Are you assertive, a born leader? Or are you more comfortable contributing under someone else's leadership? Are you outgoing, articulate, and comfortable around people? Or do you prefer working alone? Make a list of what you believe are your four or five most important qualities. Ask a relative or friend to rate your traits as well.

If you're having difficulty figuring out your interests, characteristics, or capabilities, consult your college career center. Many campuses administer a variety of tests that can help you identify interests, aptitudes, and personality traits. These tests won't reveal your "perfect" job, but they'll help you focus on the types of work best suited to your personality.

How Can You Make Yourself More Valuable?

While you're figuring out what you want from a job and what you can offer an employer, you can take positive steps toward building your career. First, look for opportunities to develop skills, gain experience, and expand your professional network. These might involve internships, volunteer work, freelance projects, part-time jobs, or projects that you initiate on your own. You can look for freelance projects on Craigslist and numerous other websites; some of these jobs have only nominal pay, but they do provide an opportunity for you to display your skills. Also consider applying your talents to *crowdsourcing* projects, in which companies and nonprofit organizations invite the public to contribute solutions to various challenges. Look for ways to expand your *employment portfolio* and establish your *personal brand* (see the following sections).

Second, learn more about the industry or industries in which you want to work, and stay on top of new developments. Join networks of professional colleagues and friends who can help you keep up with trends and events. Follow the leading voices in a profession on social media. Many professional societies have student chapters or offer students discounted memberships. Take courses and pursue other educational or life experiences that would be difficult while working full time.

Whether you call it your personal brand or your professional promise, figure out what you want to be as a professional and how you should communicate that to others.

BUILDING AN EMPLOYMENT PORTFOLIO

Employers want proof that you have the skills to succeed on the job, which can be challenging if you don't have a lot of relevant work experience in your target field. Fortunately, you can use your college classes, volunteer work, and other activities to assemble compelling proof by creating an *employment portfolio*, a collection of projects that demonstrate your skills and knowledge.

Your portfolio is likely to be a multimedia effort, with physical work samples (such as reports, proposals, or marketing materials), digital documents, web content, blog posts, photographs, video clips, and other items. As appropriate, you can include these items in your LinkedIn profile, bring them to interviews, and have them ready whenever an employer, client, or networking contact asks for samples of your work.

You have a variety of options for hosting a portfolio online. Your LinkedIn profile (see page 507) can function as your portfolio home, your college may offer portfolio hosting, or you might consider one of the many commercial portfolio hosting services. To see a selection of student e-portfolios from colleges around the United States, go to **real-timeupdates.com/ebc13**, select Student Assignments, and locate the link to student e-portfolios.

Throughout this course, pay close attention to the assignments marked "Portfolio Builder," which start in Chapter 8. These items can make good samples of your communication skills and your ability to understand and solve business-related challenges. By combining these projects with samples from your other courses, you can create a compelling portfolio when you're ready to start interviewing. Your portfolio is also a great resource for writing your résumé because it reminds you of all the great work you've done over the years. Moreover, you can continue to refine and expand your portfolio throughout your career; many independent professionals use portfolios to advertise their services.

As you assemble your portfolio, collect anything that shows your ability to perform, whether it's in school, on the job, or in other venues. However, you *must* check with employers before including any items that you created while you were an employee, and check with clients before including any *work products* (anything you wrote, designed, programmed, and so on) they purchased from you. Many business documents contain confidential information that companies don't want distributed to outside audiences.

For each item you add to your portfolio, write a brief description that helps other people understand the meaning and significance of the project. Include such items as these:

- **Background.** Why did you undertake this project? Was it a school project, a work assignment, or something you did on your own initiative?
- **Project objectives.** Explain the project's goals, if relevant.
- **Collaborators.** If you worked with others, be sure to mention that and discuss team dynamics if appropriate. For instance, if you led the team or worked with others long distance as a virtual team, point that out.
- **Constraints.** Sometimes the most impressive thing about a project is the time or budget constraints under which it was created. If such constraints apply to a project, consider mentioning them in a way that doesn't sound like an excuse for poor quality. If you had only one week to create a website, for example, you might say that "One of the intriguing challenges of this project was the deadline; I had only one week to design, compose, test, and publish this material."
- **Outcomes.** If the project's goals were measurable, what was the result? For example, if you wrote a letter soliciting donations for a charitable cause, how much money did you raise?
- **Learning experience.** If appropriate, describe what you learned during the course of the project.

Keep in mind that the portfolio itself is a communication project, so be sure to apply everything you'll learn in this course about effective communication and good design. Also, assume that potential employers will find your e-portfolio site, even if you don't tell them about it, so don't include anything that doesn't represent you at your professional best.

BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

You have probably heard the advice to develop a "personal brand" but might not know how to proceed or might not be comfortable with the concept of "branding" yourself. This section presents five steps that can make the task easier and more authentic.

Note that the process outlined here isn't about coming up with three or four words that are supposed to describe you, such as *visionary, creator, problem solver,* or things like that, as you may come across in some discussions of personal branding. This is a much more practical and comprehensive process that identifies the specific qualifications that you can bring to the job, backs them up with solid evidence, and makes sure you are ready with a concise answer when an employer asks, "So, tell me about yourself."

Don't Call It Personal Branding If You Don't Care for the Term

Some people object to the term personal branding, with its associations of product marketing, the implied need to "get out there and promote yourself," and perhaps the unseemly idea of reducing something as complex as yourself to an advertising slogan. If you are just starting you career, you might also wonder how to craft a meaningful brand when you don't have any relevant work experience.

Moreover, although personal branding makes obvious sense for professional speakers, authors, consultants, entrepreneurs, and others who must promote themselves in the public marketplace, those who aspire to professional or managerial positions in a corporate structure may rightly wonder why they need to "brand" themselves at all.

However, the underlying concept of branding as a *promise* applies to everyone, no matter the career stage or trajectory. A brand is fundamentally a promise to deliver on a specific set of values. For everyone in business, that promise is critical, whether it extends to a million people in the online audience for a TED talk or a half-dozen people inside a small company. And even if you never think about your personal brand, you are continuously creating and re-creating it by the way you conduct yourself as a professional. In other words, even if you reject the idea of personal branding, other people will form an opinion of you and your "brand" anyway, so you might as well take charge and help create the impression that you want others to have of you.

As an alternative to a personal brand, think of your *professional promise.* Frame it this way: When people hear your name, what do you want them to think about you and your professional attributes and qualifications?

Write the "Story of You"

When it's time to write or update your résumé, step back and think about where you've been in your life and your career and where you'd like to go. Helpful questions include *Do you like the path you're on, or is it time for a change? Are you focused on a particular field, or do you need some time to explore?*

This is also a great planning tool for developing a personal brand. In Chapter 15, you'll see this referred to as writing the "story of you," and it's divided into three sections:

- **Where I have been**—the experiences from my past that give me insight into where I would like to go in the future
- **Where I am now**—where I currently stand in terms of education and career, and what I know about myself (including knowledge and skills, personal attributes, and professional interests)
- **Where I want to be**—the career progress and experiences I want to have, areas I want to explore, and goals I want to achieve

Think in terms of an image or a theme you'd like to project. *Am I academically gifted? A daring innovator? A well-rounded professional with wide-ranging talents? A technical wizard? A dependable, "go-to" problem solver that people can count on? A "connector" who can bring people and resources together?*

Writing this story arc is a valuable planning exercise that helps you think about where you want to go in your career. In essence, you are clarifying who you are professionally and defining a future version of yourself—and these are the foundations of your personal brand/professional promise. Another important benefit is that it makes the personal branding effort authentic, because it is based on your individual interests and passions.

Construct Your Brand Pyramid

With your professional story arc as a guide, the next step is to construct a *brand pyramid* that has all the relevant support points needed to build a personal brand message (see Figure 2).

Start by compiling a *private inventory* of skills, attributes, experience, and areas for improvement. This should be a positive but realistic assessment of what you have to offer now and a "to-grow" list of areas where you want to develop or improve. Obviously, this inventory isn't for public consumption. As much as possible, provide evidence to back up each quality you list. If you are diligent and detail oriented, for instance, identify a time that you saved a project by methodically analyzing the situation to find a problem that others had overlooked. If you are a creative thinker, identify a time when you came up with an unusual new idea at work. Employers want to know *how* you can apply your skills, attributes, and experience; the more evidence you can provide, the better.

Next, select the appropriate materials from your inventory to develop a *public profile* that highlights the qualities you want to promote. As "Put Your Promise to Work" explains, this profile can take on a variety of forms for different communication platforms.

Finally, distill your professional promise down to a single, brief headline, also known as a *tagline* or *elevator pitch*. The headline should be a statement of compelling value, not a generic job title. Instead of "I'm a social media specialist," you might say, "I help small companies get the same reach on social media as giant corporations."

Of course, many students won't have the relevant job experience to say something like that, and your personal brand might be more an expression of potential. Even if you have no relevant professional experience, you still have personal attributes and educational qualifications that are the foundations of your brand. The key is to make sure it's realistic and suggests a logical connection between the present and the future. Someone pursuing an MBA in finance can reasonably claim to have a strong toolset for financial analysis, but someone with no corporate work experience can't claim to be a bold, high-impact executive.

Here's a good example: "I am a data science major ready to make numbers come alive through leading-edge techniques in deep learning, data mining, and visualization."

Note that both your public profile and your headline should use relevant *keywords* from target job descriptions (see page 496).
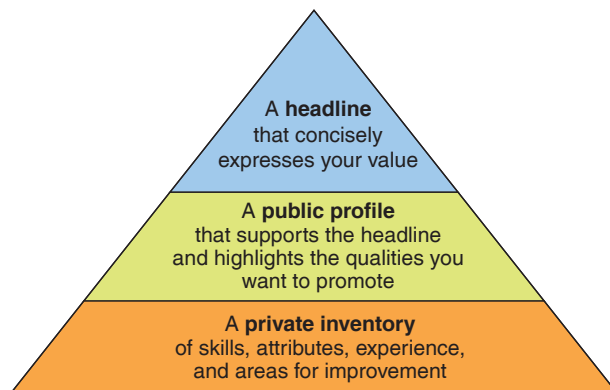
Figure 2 **Your Personal Brand Pyramid**
Build your personal brand at three levels: a *private inventory* of your skills and assets, a *public profile* based on that inventory and how you want to present yourself to the world, and a *headline* that encapsulates what you can do for employers or clients.

Reduce or Eliminate Factors That Could Damage Your Brand

Every brand, no matter how popular and powerful, can be damaged by negative perceptions or performance issues. After identifying all the positives, do an objective analysis of areas that could undermine your career-building efforts. For example, someone who tends to overpromise and underdeliver is going to develop a reputation for unreliability that could outweigh whatever positive qualities he or she can bring to the job. Other concerns might be related to specific skills that you need to develop in order to progress toward your career goals.

Be constantly mindful of the "multimedia you" that the world sees—your online presence, your personal appearance, your conduct in business and social settings, the way you sound on the phone, your mannerisms, your vocabulary, and anything else that shapes your reputation. Careers can be derailed by a single misjudged social media post, so always be putting the best "you" on display.

Put Your Promise to Work

Now it's time to put the branding message to work. Your public profile could be expressed in a variety of ways—as a conventional résumé, the summary section on LinkedIn, an infographic résumé, or the introductory section of a personal webpage or e-portfolio.

The headline can be adapted and used in multiple ways as well, including the headline field on LinkedIn, the qualifications summary on your résumé, your Twitter profile, and as a ready answer to the common interview question "So, tell me about yourself."

Naturally, your brand message should be consistent across all the platforms and conversations where it is used. For instance, an employer reviewing your résumé is likely to visit your LinkedIn profile as well, so it's important that the messages match. If you complete your branding pyramid first, it'll be easy to adapt it to a variety of different purposes while keeping your message consistent.

As you progress through your career, bear in mind that all this planning and communication is of no value if you fail to deliver on your brand promise. Remember that branding is only a *promise*—it's your *performance* that ultimately counts. When you deliver quality results time after time, your talents and professionalism will speak for you.

Lastly, your branding pyramid should be a "living document" that is updated whenever you acquire new skills or job experiences or want to move in a different direction. In addition, periodically revisiting it can be a good way to recapture the passion that initially launched you down your career path.

Stage 3: Succeeding in Your First Job

Your first job sets the stage for your career and gives you an opportunity to explore how you want to position yourself for the long term. If you are already working or are changing careers, you can combine these skills with the work-life perspective you already have to take your career to a new level.

As you progress along your career path, the time and energy you have invested in this course will continue to yield benefits year after year. As you tackle each new challenge, influential company leaders—the people who decide how quickly you'll get promoted and how much you'll earn—will be paying close attention to how well you communicate. They will observe your interactions with colleagues, customers, and business partners. They'll take note of how well you can collect data, find the essential ideas buried under mountains of information, and convey those points to other people. They'll observe your ability to adapt to different audiences and circumstances. They'll be watching when you encounter tough situations that require careful attention to ethics and etiquette. The good news: Every insight you gain and every skill you develop in this course will help you shine in your career.

Understanding the Foundations of Business Communication

No other skill can help your career in as many ways as communication. Discover what business communication is all about, why communication skills are essential to your career, how intelligent technology is revolutionizing business communication, and how to adapt your communication experiences in life and college to the business world. Improve your skills in such vital areas as listening, conflict resolution, collaboration, negotiation, and professional etiquette. Explore the advantages and the challenges of a diverse workforce, and develop the skills that every communicator needs in order to succeed in today's global, multicultural business environment.

Stefan Dahl Langstrup/Alamy Stock Photo

1

Professional Communication in a Digital, Social, Mobile World

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

1 Explain the importance of effective communication to your career and to the companies where you will work.

2 Explain what it means to communicate as a professional in a business context.

3 Contrast the conventional communication process model with the social communication model.

4 Identify five major benefits of business communication technology and three major innovations that are reshaping the practice of communication.

5 Define *ethics*, explain the difference between an ethical dilemma and an ethical lapse, and list six guidelines for making ethical communication choices.

6 Identify six related skills that you will have the opportunity to develop as you work on your communication skills in this course.

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AFFECTIVA

Bringing Emotion to the Human-Computer Experience

Like many college students, Rana el Kaliouby pursued her education with an important life goal in mind. In her case, it was developing computer programs that could "read" people's faces, a goal she pursued from her undergraduate studies in Egypt to a PhD program at the University of Cambridge in England to her work as a research scientist in the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She had become fascinated by the possibility of using artificial intelligence (AI) to identify emotional states by measuring facial expressions. Her motivation was to help people on the autism spectrum who struggle to pick up emotional cues when communicating with others. Could a system read faces and provide information to help people have richer social interactions?

After she created a program at MIT that could track emotional responses by comparing facial movements with a catalog of common expressions, she was surprised by how many of the lab's corporate sponsors were interested in it. The inquiries ranged from Toyota, which wanted to know if the program might help detect when drivers were getting drowsy, to Fox television studios, which wanted to use it for audience-testing new shows. With so many potential opportunities to pursue, the Media Lab's management decided the best move was to spin the project out as its own company. That company is Boston-based Affectiva, where el Kaliouby serves as CEO and guides the company's

Rana el Kaliouby leads Affectiva's efforts to make computer systems better at understanding and reacting to human emotions.

Courtesy of Affectiva

research and development in *affective computing* (computing dealing with human emotions).

The new company's first commercial success was in advertising, with companies using the system to see how viewers respond to digital online content. Businesses spend billions of dollars on advertising every year, for example, and the managers spending that money are understandably curious to know whether their ads are triggering the emotional responses they are designed to trigger.

From there, el Kaliouby and her team began applying the technology to other projects, and now more than a thousand companies use it in such diverse efforts as education, health care, gaming, and human resources. (Don't be surprised if you encounter an online video interview during your job search that uses Affectiva's system or something similar to measure your emotional reactions.) Affectiva has also expanded into voice analysis, giving businesses another way to assess their communication efforts.

That original dream of helping people with autism hasn't been forgotten, either. A company called Brain Power incorporates Affectiva's capabilities into Google Glass eyeglasses, creating a system that provides children and adults on the spectrum with real-time feedback that helps them develop skills needed to navigate social situations.

Beyond these applications, el Kaliouby wants people to understand how important it is for AI systems to have some degree of empathy, both to be more effective and to make sure that AI becomes a positive force in people's lives, rather than a negative. AI is reaching deeper into just about every aspect of business, including the multiple applications involving communication that you'll read about in this book. The better that computers can get along with us, the better we'll be able to get along with them.[1]

WWW.AFFECTIVA.COM

Understanding Why Communication Matters

Affectiva's work in emotion recognition and analytics (see the chapter opener) highlights the complexity of communication and its importance to every business. **Communication** is the process of transferring information and meaning between senders and receivers, using one or more forms of media. For communication to be considered successful, it also must transfer understanding.[2] As Figure 1.1 on the next page indicates, communication can happen in a variety of ways, including successful transfers of information and understanding, negotiations in which the sender and receiver arrive at an agreed-on meaning, and unsuccessful attempts in which the receiver assembles a different message than the one the sender intended.

Communication is the process of transferring information, meaning, and understanding between senders and receivers.

COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR CAREER

You can have the greatest ideas in the world, but they usually aren't much good to your company or your career if you can't express them clearly and persuasively. Some jobs, such as sales and customer support roles, are primarily about communicating. In fields such as engineering or finance, you often need to share complex ideas with executives, customers, and colleagues, and your ability to connect with people outside your field can be as important as your technical expertise. If you have the entrepreneurial urge, you will need to communicate with a wide range of audiences—from investors, bankers, and government regulators to employees, customers, and business partners.

The changing nature of employment is putting new pressure on communication skills, too. Companies such as Uber and Lyft are the most visible in the *gig economy*, where independent contractors work without many of the advantages or the disadvantages of regular employment. Many other companies now supplement their permanent workforces with independent contractors who are brought on for a short period or even just a single project. Chances are you will spend part of your career as one of these independent freelancers, working without the support network that an established company environment provides. You will have to "sell yourself" into each new contract, communicate successfully in a wide range of work situations, and take full responsibility for your career growth and success.

If you move into an executive role or launch your own company, you can expect communication to consume the majority of your time. Top executives spend most of their

If you haven't read the Prologue yet, we encourage you to give it a quick read now. It will help you get the most out of your textbook, and it offers tips on using this course to plan a more-successful and less-stressful job search.

In every career path you can take—employee, independent freelancer, entrepreneur, manager—you will need to have strong communication skills.

"The new app is on schedule."

Transmitted Meaning

Great! It's on schedule, and I don't need to worry.

"Everything is fine."

"Well, two designers quit, but I'm trying to replace them."

Negotiated Meaning

"Are you worried about anything?"

"So you are still on schedule, but now there is some risk of a slip."

"I think everything is fine."

Re-created Meaning

Uh oh. He doesn't sound confident or in control of the project.

Figure 1.1   Sharing Information and Understanding
These three exchanges between a software project manager (*left*) and his boss (*right*) illustrate the variety of ways in which information is shared between senders and receivers. In the top exchange, the sender's meaning is transmitted intact to the receiver, who accepts what the sender says at face value. In the middle exchange, the sender and receiver negotiate the meaning by discussing the situation. The negotiated meaning is that everything is fine so far, but the risk of a schedule slip is now higher than it was before. In the bottom exchange, the receiver has a negative emotional reaction to the word *think* and as a result creates her own meaning—which is that everything probably is not fine, despite what the sender says.

workdays communicating, and businesspeople who can't communicate well don't stand much chance of reaching the top.

No matter which path you follow, keep in mind that the world is full of good marketing strategists, good accountants, good engineers, and good attorneys—but it is not full of good communicators. View this as an opportunity to stand out from your competition in the job market.

COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR COMPANY

Aside from the personal benefits, communication should be important to you because it is important to your company, in three essential ways:

Companies rely on communication for efficient operations, timely business intelligence, and positive relationships.

- **Operations.** Every company needs fast, effective communication between managers and staff, within departments, between departments, and between the company and its external business partners. Communication carries everything from high-level strategic plans down to minute technical details, and any bottlenecks or breakdowns can reduce operational efficiency and create problems with quality or safety.

- **Intelligence.** Companies need to keep a constant "ear to the ground" to be alerted to new opportunities, risks, and impending problems—both internally and externally.
- **Relationships.** Just as in personal and social relationships, business relationships depend on communication. Effective communication strengthens the connections between a company and all its **stakeholders**, which are any persons or organizations significantly affected by the company's business decisions and operations.[3] Stakeholder groups include employees, customers, investors, creditors, suppliers, and local communities. Individuals within companies also rely on communication to foster the emotional connections that create a healthy work environment.[4]

Stakeholders are any persons or organizations significantly affected by a company's business decisions and operations.

Put simply, no business can function without effective communication, and the better the communication, the better every part of the company is likely to run.

WHAT MAKES BUSINESS COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVE?

To make your communication efforts as effective as possible, focus on making them *practical, factual, concise, clear,* and *persuasive*:

Effective messages are *practical, factual, concise, clear,* and *persuasive*.

- **Provide practical information.** Give recipients useful information that helps them solve problems, pursue opportunities, or take other action.
- **Give facts rather than vague impressions.** Use concrete language, specific detail, and information that is clear, convincing, accurate, and ethical. Even when an opinion is called for, present compelling evidence to support your conclusion.
- **Present information in a concise, efficient manner.** Concise messages show respect for people's time, and they increase the chances of a positive response.
- **Clarify expectations and responsibilities.** Craft messages to generate a specific response from a specific audience. When appropriate, clearly state what you expect from audience members or what you can do for them.
- **Offer compelling, persuasive arguments and recommendations.** When a situation calls for persuasive communication, show your readers how they will benefit by responding the way you would like them to respond.

Keep these five important characteristics in mind as you compare the ineffective and effective versions of the message in Figure 1.2 on the next page.

Communicating as a Professional

You've been communicating your entire life, of course, but if you don't have a lot of work experience yet, meeting the expectations of a professional environment might require some adjustment. A good place to start is to consider what it means to be a professional. **Professionalism** is the quality of performing at a high level and conducting oneself with purpose and pride. It means doing more than putting in the hours and collecting a paycheck: True professionals go beyond minimum expectations and commit to making meaningful contributions. Professionalism can be broken down into six distinct traits: striving to excel, being dependable and accountable, being a team player, demonstrating a sense of etiquette, making ethical decisions, and maintaining a positive outlook (see Figure 1.3 on page 7).

Professionalism is the quality of performing at a high level and conducting oneself with purpose and pride.

A key message to glean from Figure 1.3 is how much these elements of professionalism depend on effective communication. For example, to be a team player, you need to be able to collaborate, resolve conflicts, and interact with a wide variety of personalities. Without strong communication skills, you won't be able to perform to your potential, and others won't recognize you as the professional you'd like to be.

This section offers a brief look at the skills employers will expect you to have, the nature of communication in an organizational environment, and the importance of adopting an audience-centered approach.

Ineffective

Social media strategy - Message [HTML]

To.. <Customer service list>
Cc..
Subject: Social media strategy

All,

The consultant we discussed at last week's status meeting is available to meet next Tuesday. This guy has helped a number of customer service organizations, and he'll be available to give us some advice and figure out what our needs are.

Let's not waste this opportunity to learn more about social media tools for customer service. I'd like everyone to prepare some intelligent questions ahead of time. We'll forward them to Mr. Johnson so that he can think about them before the meeting. I was rather disappointed last time we brought in an expert like this; I have to beg these people to talk to us, and most of you just sat and stared during the Q&A session.

Details:
Tuesday
10:00 a.m. to whenever
Mt. Shasta room

I consider it very important for everyone on the team to be at this meeting, but if you won't attend, at least try to phone in so you can hear what's going on.

Shari

(a) The vague subject line fails to alert people to the upcoming meeting.

(b) The greeting is cold and off-putting.

(c) The opening paragraph fails to provide necessary background information for anyone who missed the meeting.

(d) A negative, accusatory tone puts readers on the defensive, and the request for action fails to clarify who needs to do what by when.

(e) The meeting information includes the day, but not the date, which could lead to confusion.

(f) The wording here assumes that people who won't attend don't want to, which might not be true. The writer also fails to invite questions ahead of the meeting.

(g) The lack of a closing (such as "Thank you") contributes to the harsh, abrupt tone.

(h) The writer fails to provide alternative contact information or invite questions about the meeting.

Effective

Social media strategy meeting Tues 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Message (HTML)

From: shari.washington@sprenco.com
To.. <Customer service list>
Cc..
Subject: Social media strategy meeting, Tues 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Hi team,

The customer service consultant we discussed at last week's status meeting is available to talk with us next Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. For those of you who missed the meeting, Walter Johnson has helped a number of organizations use social media tools to improve customer service programs. He's agreed to spend several hours with us to answer any questions we have about these technologies.

This meeting is a great opportunity for us to learn about important innovations in customer service, so let's make sure get the most out of it. I'd like each of the project leaders to brainstorm with your groups and prepare questions that are relevant to your specific parts of the social media project. Please email these questions to Pete (peter.laws@sprenco.com) by the end of the day Thursday, and he'll forward them to Mr. Johnson before the meeting.

Details:
Tuesday, March 12
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Mt. Shasta room
We're ordering in sandwiches; please register your choice on the intranet by Monday at 5:00 p.m.

For those who can't attend in person, please dial in on the conference line. You'll be able to see the slides via WebEx, as usual. If you have any questions, feel free to drop by my office any time on Friday.

Thanks,
Shari

Shari Washington
Group Manager, Retail Systems
Office: 747-555-1852
Mobile: 747-555-6868

(a) An informative subject line helps people grasp important details immediately.
(b) The greeting is friendly without being too casual.

(c) The opening paragraph fills in missing information so that everyone can grasp the importance of the message.

(d) This upbeat paragraph emphasizes the positive value of the meeting, and the request provides enough information to enable readers to respond.

(e) The date eliminates scheduling uncertainty.

(f) The writer offers everyone a chance to participate, without making anyone feel guilty about not being able to attend in person. The closing paragraph invites questions ahead of time so they don't derail the meeting.

(g) Like the greeting, the close has a warm and personal tone, without being too casual.

(h) The *email signature* provides additional information and alternative contact options.

Figure 1.2   Effective Professional Communication
At first glance, the first email message looks like a reasonable attempt at communicating with the members of a project team. However, review the blue annotations to see just how many problems the message really has.

Be the best
Pros strive to excel, and excelling at every level is how you build a great career.

Be dependable
Pros keep their promises, meet their commitments, learn from their mistakes, and take responsibility for their errors.

Be ethical
Responsible pros work to avoid ethical lapses and weigh their options carefully when facing ethical dilemmas.

Be a team player
Pros know how to contribute to a larger cause and make others around them better.

Be positive
You owe it to yourself, your colleagues, and your company to maintain a positive outlook, even when the going gets tough.

Be respectful
Good business etiquette is a sign of respect for those around you; respecting others is not only good—it's good for your career.

Figure 1.3 Elements of Professionalism
To be respected as a true professional, develop these six qualities.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT EMPLOYERS EXPECT FROM YOU

Today's employers expect you to be competent at a range of communication tasks that reflect the value of communication discussed on pages 4–5:

- **Acquiring, processing, and sharing information.** Employers expect you to be able to recognize information needs, locate and evaluate reliable sources of information (particularly from online sources), organize information into cohesive messages, and use information ethically. This collection of skills is often referred to as *digital information fluency.*[5] Information fluency includes **critical thinking**, which is the ability to evaluate evidence completely and objectively in order to form logical conclusions and make sound recommendations.
- **Using communication to foster positive working relationships.** This task includes listening, practicing good etiquette, resolving conflicts respectfully, and communicating with people from diverse backgrounds.
- **Representing your employer in the public arena.** Employers expect you to conduct yourself responsibly and professionally on social media and in other venues and to follow accepted standards of grammar, spelling, and other aspects of quality writing and speaking.
- **Efficiently using the tools at your disposal.** Aside from in-person conversations and meetings, every instance of business communication involves some level of technological assistance, so employers expect a level of proficiency with the tools they provide you to use.

You'll have the opportunity to practice these skills throughout this course, but don't stop there. Successful professionals continue to hone communication skills throughout their careers.

Employers expect you to possess a wide range of communication skills.

Critical thinking is the ability to evaluate evidence completely and objectively in order to form logical conclusions and make sound recommendations.

MOBILE APP
Pocket collects online content you'd like to read or view later and syncs it across your mobile devices.

Practice Your Professionalism

Don't wait until you're on the job to develop your professionalism. College gives you multiple opportunities to hone your approach to work, which will help you hit the ground running after you graduate. The sooner you can get in sync with the professional work environment, the sooner you are likely to succeed in your first job and position yourself for a promotion. If you are already working or have worked in a business setting, think about the ways you could make an even stronger impression and fine-tune those skills.

Here are three opportunities to start pursuing now:

- **Communication with your instructors.** If you have ever started an email message to an instructor with "Yo, prof," now would be a good time to up your game. Imagine that you are communicating with a high-level executive or someone else whose opinion of you will have a huge impact on your career advancement. You don't have to be stiff and overly formal; read the situation based on how each instructor communicates with you. Use a respectful greeting (ask your instructors how they would like to be greeted in person and in writing, if they haven't already told you), complete sentences, and standard punctuation.

- **The quality of your work.** Everything you produce reflects your commitment to quality, in both substance and presentation. Get in the habit of doing your best work now, and it'll be second nature by the time you're getting paid to do it.
- **Scheduling and commitments.** Missing deadlines on the job can mean missing major career opportunities. Meeting your commitments requires the ability to estimate how long things will take (which comes with practice and careful planning) and the mental strength to power through the tough parts of a project. See "Think Now, Write Later" on page 174 for advice on how to prevent last-minute surprises when you're staring down a deadline.

COACH YOURSELF

1. How would you rate the quality of your interactions with your instructors? What could you do to improve communication?
2. Do you feel awkward when communicating at a more formal level than you are accustomed to in your personal or social life? What steps can you take to get comfortable with "professional-grade" communication before you graduate?

COMMUNICATING IN AN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

The *formal communication network* mirrors the company's organizational structure.

In addition to having the proper skills, you need to learn how to apply those skills in the business environment, which can be quite different from the social and scholastic environments you are accustomed to. Every organization has a **formal communication network**, in which ideas and information flow along the lines of command (the hierarchical levels) in the company's organization structure (see Figure 1.4).

Throughout the formal network, information flows in four directions. *Downward communication* flows from top executives to middle managers to frontline employees, conveying executive decisions and providing information that helps employees do their jobs. *Upward communication* flows from employees to middle managers and from middle managers to top executives, giving those at high levels insight into problems, trends, opportunities, grievances, and performance. *Horizontal* or *lateral communication* flows between departments to help employees share information, coordinate tasks, and solve complex problems. Finally, with *diagonal communication*, information crosses department lines while moving up or down.[6] When problems and opportunities span multiple departments, horizontal and diagonal flows can help ensure that communication doesn't get stifled moving up and down the vertical lines in the organization chart.[7]

The *informal communication network* encompasses all communication that occurs outside the formal network.

Every organization also has an **informal communication network**, which encompasses all communication that occurs outside of formal channels. Some of this informal communication takes place naturally when employees interact on the job and in social settings, and some of it takes place when the formal network doesn't provide information that employees want. In fact, the limitations of formal communication networks helped spur the growth of social media in the business environment. Communication in the informal network is healthy and important, because the formal network can't always capture and share all the information that helps people do their jobs. However, if a workplace is rife with rumors and company gossip, this situation could be a sign that the formal network is not functioning effectively.
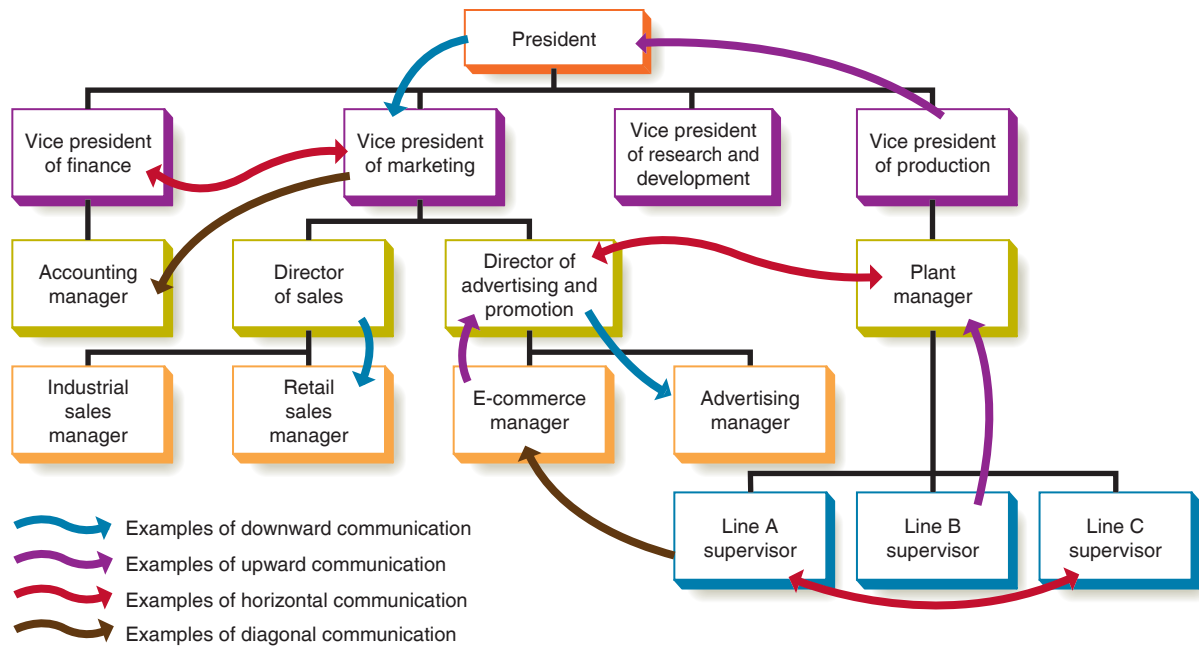
Figure 1.4   Formal Communication Network
The formal communication network is defined by the relationships between the various job positions in the organization. Messages can flow upward (from a lower-level employee to a higher-level employee), downward (from a higher-level employee to a lower-level employee), horizontally (across the organization, between employees at the same or similar levels), or diagonally (across departments and upward or downward).

ADOPTING AN AUDIENCE-CENTERED APPROACH

An **audience-centered approach** involves understanding and respecting the members of your audience and making every effort to get your message across in a way that is meaningful to them. This approach is also known as adopting the **"you" attitude**, where *you* is the person receiving the message, in contrast to messages that are about *me* as the sender. Learn as much as possible about the beliefs, education, age, status, communication style, and personal and professional concerns of your readers and listeners. If you're addressing people you don't know and you're unable to find out more about them, try to project yourself into their position by using common sense and imagination.

Relating to the needs of others is a key part of *emotional intelligence*, the ability to read other people's emotions accurately and to manage one's own emotions in productive ways.[8] The more you know about the people you're communicating with, the easier it will be to focus on their needs—which, in turn, will make it easier for them to hear your message, understand it, and respond positively. A vital element of audience-centered communication is professional *etiquette*, which you'll study in Chapter 3.

The *audience-centered approach* involves understanding, respecting, and meeting the needs of your audience members; it is also known as adopting the *"you" attitude*.

Exploring the Communication Process

Even with the best intentions, communication efforts can fail. Messages can get lost or simply ignored. The receiver of a message can interpret it in ways the sender never imagined. Two people receiving the same information can reach different conclusions about what it means.

Fortunately, by understanding communication as a process with distinct steps, you can improve the odds that your messages will reach their intended audiences and produce their intended effects. This section explores the communication process in two stages: first by following a message from one sender to one receiver in the conventional communication model and then by expanding on that approach with multiple messages and participants in the social communication model.

3 LEARNING OBJECTIVE Contrast the conventional communication process model with the social communication model.

THE CONVENTIONAL COMMUNICATION MODEL

Viewing communication as a process (Figure 1.5), you can identify and improve the skills you need in order to be more successful. Many variations on this process model exist, but these eight steps provide a practical overview:

Viewing communication as a process helps you identify steps you can take to improve your success as a communicator.

1. **The sender has an idea.** Whether a communication effort will ultimately be effective starts right here and depends on the nature of the idea and the motivation for sending it. For example, if your motivation is to offer a solution to a problem, you have a better chance of crafting a meaningful message than if your motivation is merely to complain about a problem.

2. **The sender encodes the idea as a message.** When someone puts an idea into a **message**—which you can think of as the "container" for an idea—he or she is **encoding** it, or expressing it in words or images. Much of the focus of this course is on developing the skills needed to encode your ideas into effective messages.

When senders *encode* ideas into *messages,* they express those ideas in words or images.

3. **The sender produces the message in a transmittable medium.** With the appropriate message to express an idea, the sender now needs a **communication medium** to present that message to the intended audience. Media can be divided into oral (spoken), written, or visual formats.

The *communication medium* is the form a message takes; the *communication channel* is the system used to deliver the message.

4. **The sender transmits the message through a channel.** Technology continues to increase the number of **communication channels** you can use to transmit your messages. The distinction between medium and channel can get a bit murky, but think of the medium as the *form* a message takes (such as a written message) and the channel as the system used to *deliver* the message (such as Twitter or email).

5. **The audience receives the message.** If the channel functions properly, the message reaches its intended audience. However, mere arrival at the destination is no guarantee that the message will be noticed or understood correctly. As "How Audiences Receive Messages" (page 12) explains, many messages are either ignored or misinterpreted.

6. **The audience decodes the message.** After a message is received, the receiver needs to extract the idea from the message, a step known as **decoding**. "How Audiences Decode Messages" (page 12) takes a closer look at this complex and subtle step in the process.

When receivers *decode* messages, they extract meaning from the words or images they've received.

7. **The audience responds to the message.** By crafting messages in ways that show the benefits of responding, senders can increase the chances that recipients will respond in positive ways. However, as "How Audiences Respond to Messages" (page 13) points out, whether a receiver responds as the sender hopes depends on the receiver (a) *remembering* the message long enough to act on it, (b) being *able* to act on it, and (c) being *motivated* to respond.

8. **The audience provides feedback to the sender.** In addition to responding (or not responding) to the message, audience members may give **feedback** that helps the sender evaluate the effectiveness of the communication effort. Feedback can be

Feedback is a reaction from the receiver back to the original sender that can offer clues about how successful the original message was.
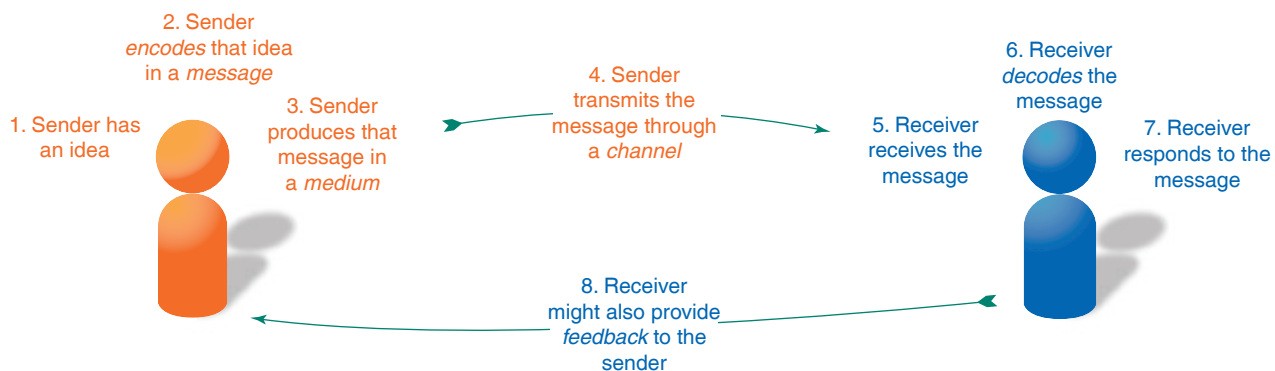

Figure 1.5   **The Conventional Communication Process**
This eight-step model is a simplified view of one cycle of communication. In reality, the process is complicated with noise, barriers, and interruptions, but understanding the basic concepts of encoding and decoding will help you as a sender and as a receiver.

verbal (using written or spoken words), nonverbal (using gestures, facial expressions, or other signals), or both. Just like the original message, however, this feedback from the receiver also needs to be decoded carefully. A smile, for example, can have many meanings.

Keep in mind that this description captures only one cycle of the communication process. A conversational exchange (in person, on the phone, or through a digital channel) could include dozens of these cycles before the sender and the receiver achieve a satisfactory transfer of information and understanding.

Considering the complexity of this process—and the barriers and distractions that often stand between sender and receiver—it should come as no surprise that communication efforts often fail to achieve the sender's objective. Fortunately, the better you understand the process, the more successful you'll be.

The following sections take a closer look at two important aspects of the process: environmental barriers that can block or distort messages and the steps audiences take to receive, decode, and respond to messages.

> **REAL-TIME UPDATES**
> LEARN MORE BY WATCHING THIS VIDEO
> **The process breakdowns that lead to miscommunication**
> This humorous video illustrates how communication efforts break down and how to avoid common problems. Go to **real-timeupdates .com/ebc13** and select Learn More in the Students section.

BARRIERS IN THE COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

Within any communication environment, messages can be disrupted by a variety of **communication barriers**. These barriers include noise and distractions, competing messages, filters, and channel breakdowns:

Communication barriers can block or distort messages before they reach the intended audience.

- **Noise and distractions.** External distractions range from uncomfortable meeting rooms to computer screens cluttered with instant messages and reminders popping up all over the place. Internal distractions are thoughts and emotions that prevent audiences from focusing on incoming messages. The common habit of *multitasking*— attempting more than one task at a time—is practically guaranteed to create barriers when communication is involved, because the human brain simply isn't wired to work that way. You may think you are doing two or more tasks at once, but you are really shifting back and forth between individual tasks, and your productivity and focus can suffer every time you shift.[9] As more communication takes place on mobile devices, the need to insulate yourself from noise and distractions is going to keep growing.
- **Competing messages.** Having your audience's undivided attention is a rare luxury. In most cases, you must compete with other messages that are trying to reach your audience at the same time.
- **Filters.** Messages can be blocked or distorted by *filters*, any human or technological interventions between the sender and the receiver. Filtering can be both intentional (such as automatically filing incoming messages based on sender or content) or unintentional (such as an overly aggressive spam filter that deletes legitimate emails). The structure and culture of an organization can also inhibit the flow of vital messages. And, in some cases, the people or companies you rely on to deliver your message can distort it or filter it to meet their own needs.
- **Channel breakdowns.** Sometimes the channel simply breaks down and fails to deliver your message at all. A colleague you were counting on to deliver a message to your boss might have forgotten to do so, or a computer server might have crashed and prevented your blog from updating.

Everyone in an organization can help minimize barriers and distractions. As a communicator, try to be aware of any barriers that could prevent your messages from reaching their intended audiences. As a manager, keep an eye out for any organizational barriers that could be inhibiting the flow of information. In any situation, a small dose of common sense and courtesy goes a long way. Turn off that mobile phone before you step into a meeting. Don't talk across the tops of other people's cubicles, and don't play music at a level that can distract others.

Minimizing barriers and distractions in the communication environment is everyone's responsibility.

Finally, take steps to insulate yourself from distractions. Don't let messages interrupt you every minute of the day. Instead, set aside time to attend to messages all at once so that you can focus the rest of the time.

INSIDE THE MIND OF YOUR AUDIENCE

After a message works its way through the communication channel and reaches the intended audience, it encounters a whole new set of challenges. Understanding how audiences receive, decode, and respond to messages will help you create more effective messages.

How Audiences Receive Messages

To truly receive a message, audience members need to sense it, select it, then perceive it as a message.

For an audience member to receive a message, three events need to occur: The receiver has to *sense* the presence of a message, *select* it from all the other messages clamoring for attention, and *perceive* it as an actual message (as opposed to random, pointless noise).[10] You can appreciate the magnitude of this challenge by walking down any busy street in a commercial section of town. You will encounter hundreds of messages—billboards, posters, store window displays, car stereos, people talking on mobile phones, car horns, street signs, traffic lights, and so on. However, you will sense, select, and perceive only a fraction of these messages.

Selection attention is focusing on a subset of incoming stimuli or messages while ignoring others; it can cause intended recipients to block out some or all of your message.

Today's business audiences are much like pedestrians on busy streets. They are inundated with so many messages and so much noise that they can miss or ignore many of the messages intended for them. One of the mind's defenses against this barrage is **selective attention**, which is focusing on a subset of the incoming stimuli or information sources and ignoring others.[11] Not surprisingly, this focused attention can be helpful at times and harmful at others. If you are on your mobile phone trying hard to listen to the other party, your mind will try to block out all the noise sources—one of which might be a car horn warning you to get out of the way.

To improve the odds that your messages will be successfully perceived by your audience, pay close attention to expectations, ease of use, familiarity, empathy, and technical compatibility.

Throughout this course, you will learn a variety of techniques to craft messages that get noticed. In general, follow these five principles to increase your chances of success:

- **Consider audience expectations.** Deliver messages using the media and channels that the audience expects. If colleagues expect meeting notices to be delivered by email, don't suddenly switch gears and start delivering the notices via blog posts without telling anyone. Of course, sometimes going *against* expectations can stimulate audience attention, which is why advertisers sometimes do wacky and creative things to get noticed. However, for most business communication efforts, following the expectations of your audience is the most efficient way to get your message across.
- **Make messages user-friendly.** Even if audiences are actively looking for your messages, they may not get the messages if you make them hard to find, hard to navigate, or hard to read.
- **Emphasize familiarity.** Use words, images, and designs that are familiar to your audience. For example, company websites often put information about the company on a page called "About" or "About Us," so many visitors expect to see such information on a page with this title.
- **Practice empathy.** Make sure your messages speak to the audience by clearly addressing *their* wants and needs—not just yours. This is the essence of the "you" attitude.
- **Design for compatibility.** Make sure your messages are compatible with the devices your audiences will use to read, listen to, or view them on. For example, websites designed for full-size computer screens can be difficult to view on mobile devices, so contemporary web design emphasizes the need to support a wide variety of screen sizes and modes of interaction.

How Audiences Decode Messages

Decoding is a complex process; receivers often extract different meanings from messages than senders attempted to encode in their messages.

A received message doesn't "mean" anything until the recipient decodes it and assigns meaning to it, and there is no guarantee the receiver will assign the same meaning that the sender intended. Assigning meaning through decoding is a highly personal process influenced by culture, individual experience, learning and thinking styles, ego, hopes, fears, beliefs, and even temporary moods.

Our minds have a variety of self-defense mechanisms that protect our perceptions of the world and of ourselves, and our minds sometimes ignore, deny, or distort incoming information that threatens those views. If you have ever used the phrase, "You only hear what you want to hear," you were referring to an example of this distorted perception. For example, if you ask four people to review a business plan that you believe is rather brilliant, and three of the appraisals come back positive, your ego will be tempted to reject the negative comments in the fourth review.

Differences in language and usage also influence received meaning. If you ask an employee to send you a report on sales figures "as soon as possible," does that mean within 10 seconds, 10 minutes, or 10 days? By clarifying expectations and resolving potential ambiguities in your messages, you can minimize such uncertainties.

Individual thinking styles are another important factor in message decoding. For instance, someone who places a high value on objective analysis and clear logic might interpret a message differently than someone who values emotion or intuition (reaching conclusions without using rational processes).

In general, the more experiences you share with another person, the more likely you are to share your perceptions of the world and therefore arrive at the same meanings for a given message (see Figure 1.6). Careful audience analysis helps you understand how much of this overlap you have with your readers or listeners. The less shared experience you have with your audiences, the more background information and context you will need to provide in your messages.

> It's human nature to protect our views of the world and of ourselves, even to the extent of ignoring or distorting incoming information to fit our preconceived notions of reality.

How Audiences Respond to Messages

Your message has been delivered, received, and correctly decoded. Now what? Will audience members respond in the way you'd like them to? Only if three events occur.

First, the recipient must *remember* the message long enough to act on it. Simplifying greatly, memory works in several stages: *Sensory memory* momentarily captures incoming data from the senses, then whatever sensory data the recipient pays attention to are transferred to *short-term memory.* Information survives in short-term memory for only a matter of seconds and will disappear or get crowded out by new information if it isn't transferred to *long-term memory.* This transfer can be done either actively (such as when a person memorizes a list of items) or passively (such as when a new piece of information connects with something else the recipient already has stored in long-term memory). Finally, the information needs to be *retrieved* when the recipient wants to act on it.[12] By communicating in ways that reflect the audience's wants and needs, you increase the chance that your messages will be remembered and retrieved.

Second, the recipient must to be *able* to respond as you wish. Obviously, if recipients simply cannot do what you want them to do, they will not respond according to your plan. By understanding your audience (you'll learn more about audience analysis in Chapter 5), you can work to minimize these unsuccessful outcomes.

> Audiences will likely respond to a message if they remember it, if they're able to respond, and if they're properly motivated to respond.

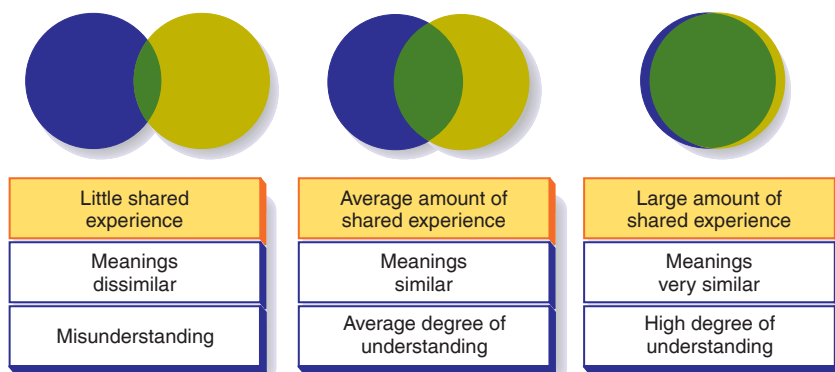| Little shared experience	Average amount of shared experience	Large amount of shared experience
Meanings dissimilar	Meanings similar	Meanings very similar
Misunderstanding	Average degree of understanding	High degree of understanding

Figure 1.6   How Shared Experience Affects Understanding
The more two people or two groups of people share experiences—personal, professional, and cultural—the more likely it is that receivers will extract the intended meanings that senders encode into the messages.

By explaining how audiences will benefit by responding positively to your messages, you'll increase their motivation to respond.

Third, the recipient must be *motivated* to respond. You'll encounter many situations in which your audience has the option of responding but isn't required to. For instance, a record company may or may not offer your band a contract, or your boss may or may not respond to your request for a raise. Throughout this course, you'll learn techniques for crafting messages that can help motivate readers to respond positively to your messages.

THE SOCIAL COMMUNICATION MODEL

The conventional model presented in Figure 1.5 illustrates how a single idea moves from one sender to one receiver. In a larger sense, it also helps represent the traditional nature of much business communication, which was primarily defined by a *publishing* or *broadcasting* mindset. Externally, a company issued carefully scripted messages to a mass audience that often had few options for responding to those messages or initiating messages of their own. Customers and other interested parties had few ways to connect with one another to ask questions, share information, or offer support. Internally, communication tended to follow the same "we talk, you listen" model, with upper managers issuing directives to lower-level supervisors and employees.

The *social communication model* is interactive, conversational, and usually open to all who wish to participate.

However, in recent years, a variety of technologies have enabled and inspired a new approach to business communication. In contrast to the publishing mindset, this **social communication model** is interactive, conversational, and usually open to all who wish to participate. Audience members are no longer passive recipients of messages but active participants in a conversation. Social media have given customers and other stakeholders a voice they did not have in the past.

Instead of transmitting a fixed message, a sender in a social media environment initiates a conversation by asking a question or sharing valuable information. Information spread this way is often revised and reshaped by the participants as they forward it and comment on it. People can expand it, confirm it, amplify it, or refute it, depending on their needs and interests. Figure 1.7 lists some of the significant differences between the traditional and social models of business communication.

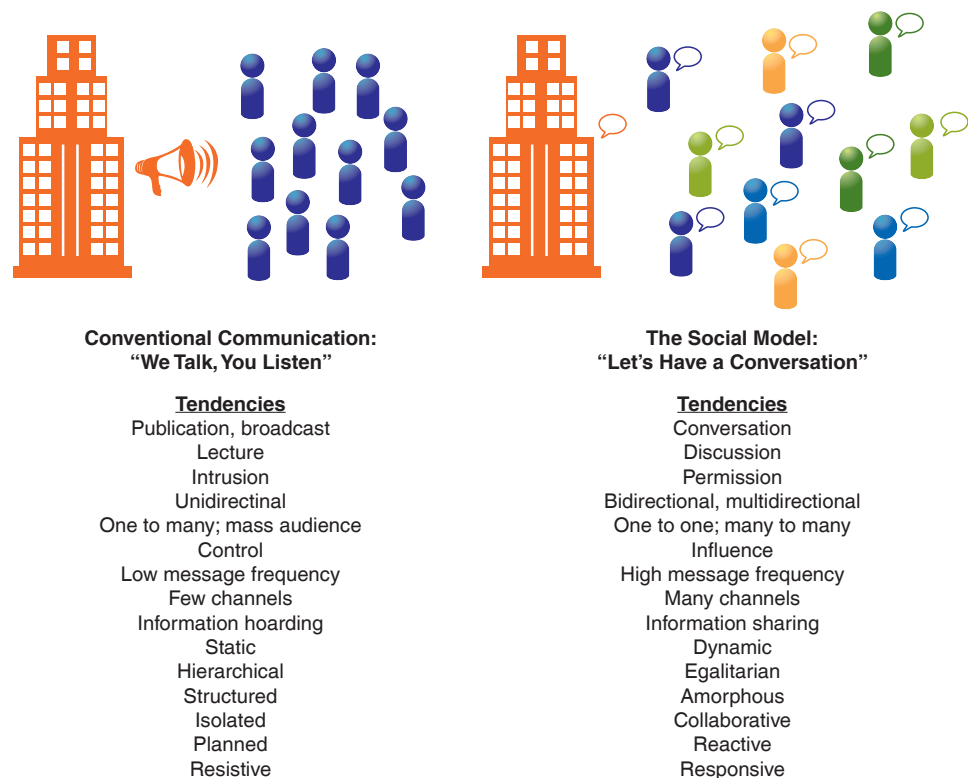| Conventional Communication: "We Talk, You Listen"	The Social Model: "Let's Have a Conversation"
Tendencies	**Tendencies**
Publication, broadcast	Conversation
Lecture	Discussion
Intrusion	Permission
Unidirectinal	Bidirectional, multidirectional
One to many; mass audience	One to one; many to many
Control	Influence
Low message frequency	High message frequency
Few channels	Many channels
Information hoarding	Information sharing
Static	Dynamic
Hierarchical	Egalitarian
Structured	Amorphous
Isolated	Collaborative
Planned	Reactive
Resistive	Responsive

Figure 1.7   **The Social Communication Model**
The social communication model differs from conventional communication strategies and practices in a number of significant ways.

The social communication model offers many advantages, but it has some disadvantages as well, starting with less control. People inside and outside a company have always been able to refute management statements or spread rumors, for example, but owners and managers could assert at least a degree of control because the options for everyone else were limited and usually expensive. Now that more stakeholders have a say in the conversation via social media, they can use the megaphone power of the crowd to shape public perceptions in significant ways, such as arranging boycotts of companies whose policies they disagree with or influencing where and how companies advertise.

A second potential disadvantage of the social model is complexity. Companies and individuals have access to more information than ever before, which is both positive and negative. On the negative side, there are more communication channels to monitor, more work is needed to separate valuable information from noise, there is a greater risk of the spread of false information, and there is a greater threat of information overload (see below).

Social communication has two potential disadvantages for business: less control over messages and greater complexity.

Using Technology to Improve Communication

Contemporary business communication is a technology-enabled activity, and your success as a communicator will depend on your comfort and skill with the various tools you'll have at your disposal. You are already using some of these tools, and you will be able to adapt your experience with various forms of digital and social media to workplace communication.

THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Technology brings a wide variety of benefits to business communication, which can be grouped into five key areas:

- Making communication more effective by helping people craft messages that convey their ideas more clearly and persuasively
- Making communication more efficient by reducing the time and effort needed to create, transmit, and consume messages
- Improving research tools to help communicators discover, process, and apply information
- Assisting communicators with decision-making by guiding them through complex sets of data
- Removing communication barriers so more people can participate in the communication process more easily

The potential benefits of communication technology include

- *Greater effectiveness*
- *Greater efficiency*
- *Better and easier research*
- *Improved decision making*
- *Fewer barriers*

You probably take advantage of many benefits provided by communication technology already, from spell checkers to search engines to a voice-input virtual assistant on a smartphone. Throughout the book, you'll see examples of both simple and esoteric technologies that deliver these benefits, including in the special feature on pages 20–23, "Empowering Communicators with Intelligent Communication Technology."

While technology can help communicators in some powerful ways, these benefits don't come automatically. When tools are designed poorly or used inappropriately, they can hinder communication more than help. To use communication technology effectively, bear these five points in mind:

MOBILE APP
RescueTime keeps track of how you spend your time and lets you know if you're losing too much of your day to social media and other distractions.

- **Keep technology in perspective.** Any technology is simply a tool, a means by which you can accomplish certain tasks. Technology is an aid to communication, not a replacement for it. Moreover, it can get in the way if not used thoughtfully. Throughout the book, you'll see advice on keeping the focus on your messages and your audiences and on using technology to enhance the communication process without overwhelming it.
- **Guard against information overload.** The overuse or misuse of communication technology can lead to **information overload**, in which people receive more information than they can effectively process. Information overload can cause distractions,

Information overload occurs when people receive more information than they can effectively process.