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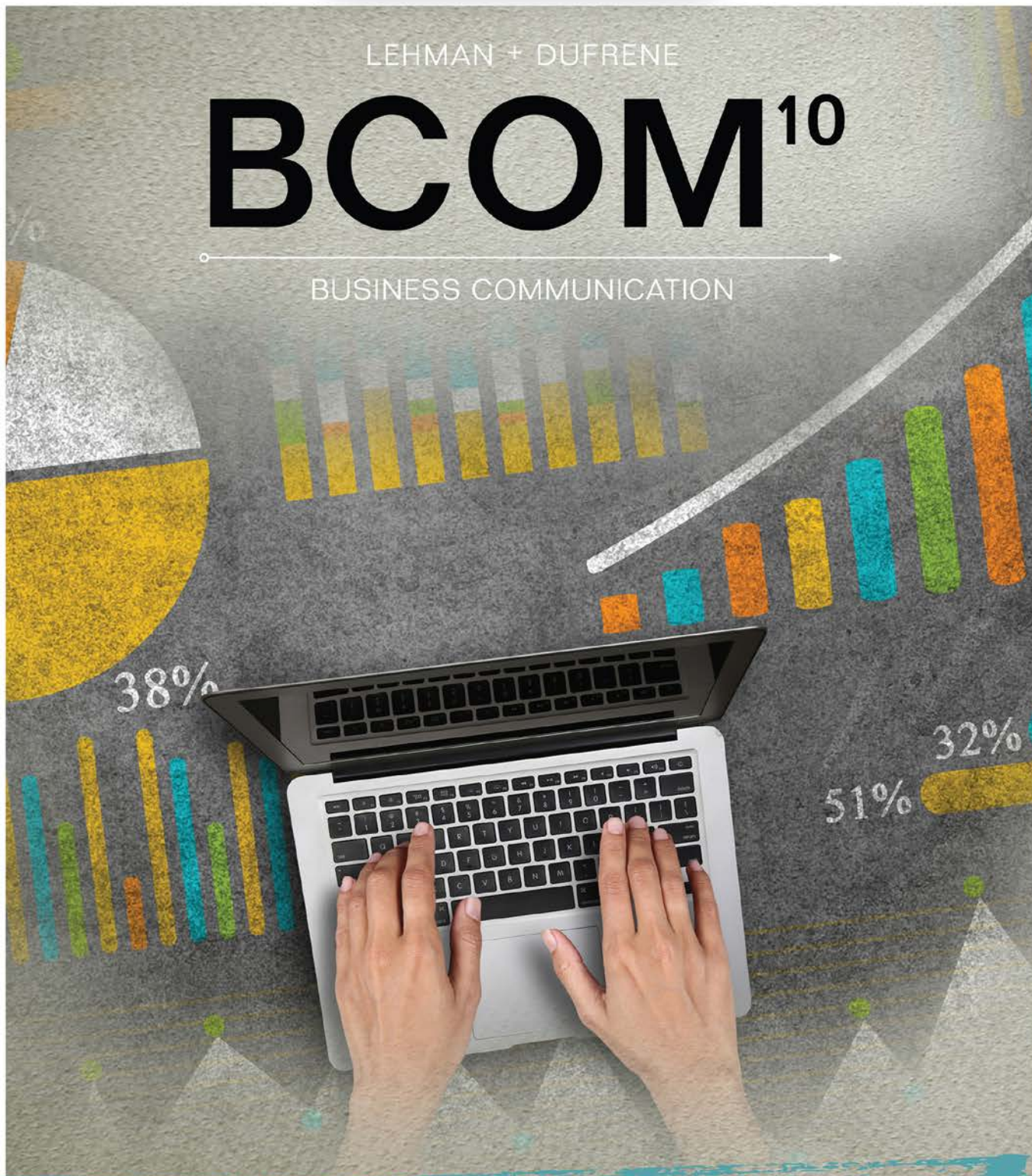
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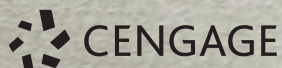
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BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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1 | Establishing a Framework for Business Communication

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to…

1-1 Define communication and describe the value of communication in business.

1-2 Explain the communication process model and the ultimate objective of the communication process.

1-3 Discuss how information flows in an organization.

1-4 Explain how legal and ethical constraints, diversity challenges, changing technology, and team environment act as contextual forces that influence the process of business communication.

1-1 VALUE OF COMMUNICATION

We communicate to satisfy needs in both our work and private lives. Each of us wants to be heard, appreciated, and wanted. We also want to accomplish tasks and achieve goals. Generally people communicate for three basic purposes: to inform, to persuade, and to entertain. However, in the professional workplace some of these purposes have greater importance. Informing and persuading are common purposes of communication in the workplace; entertainment is less so. In addition, establishing and maintaining our credibility and positive relationships with others are also important purposes in an organizational setting.

What is communication? Communication is the process of exchanging and interpreting information and meaning between or among individuals through a system of symbols, signs, and behavior. In ideal situations, the goal is to reach mutual understanding. Studies indicate that managers typically spend 60% to 80% of their time involved in communication. In your career

activities, you will communicate in a wide variety of ways, including

- listening and contributing to decision making and problem solving while attending meetings;
- writing various types of messages to inform and persuade others about your ideas and the services and products your organization provides;
- presenting information and persuasive messages to large and small groups in face-to-face and virtual environments;
- explaining and clarifying management procedures and work assignments;
- coordinating the work of various employees, departments, and other work groups;
- evaluating and counseling employees and;
- promoting the company's products, services, and image using a variety of channels in various contexts.

1-2 THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Effective business communication is essential to success in today's work environments. Recent surveys of executives demonstrate that abilities in writing and speaking are major determinants of career success in many fields.[1] Although essential to personal and professional success, effective business communication does not occur automatically. Your own experiences likely have taught you that a message is not interpreted correctly just because you transmitted it. An effective communicator anticipates possible breakdowns in the communication process—the unlimited ways the message can be misunderstood. This mind set provides the concentration to plan and design the initial message effectively and to be prepared to intervene at the appropriate time to ensure that the message received is on target.

Consider the transactional process model of communication presented in Figure 1.1. These seemingly simple steps actually represent a very complex process.

A number of communication process models exist. The transactional model is useful, though, because it illustrates the complexity of the communication process and reveals some of the challenges to effective communication that might emerge in a communication encounter.

FIGURE 1.1 THE TRANSACTIONAL PROCESS MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

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According to the transactional process model, two parties involved in a communication encounter are potentially both communicating at the same time, particularly if the encounter is face-to-face. That's because in face-to-face communication situations, parties to the encounter are continuously interpreting each other's nonverbal signals. Some scholars say more than 90% of the information in a face-to-face encounter may be sent nonverbally. But even in a cellphone conversation, silences and tone of voice may be interpreted in various ways. Even a written message may provide information about the writer that he or she did not intend to convey.

In an ideal communication situation, one party would be able to encode his or her message in such a way that the receiving party would understand it exactly as intended. However, this goal can be challenging for a variety of reasons, or what are called **interferences** or *barriers* to effective communication. For example,

- differences in educational level, experience, culture, and other characteristics of the sender and the receiver increase the complexity of encoding and decoding a message;

- physical interferences in the channel, including a noisy environment, interruptions, and uncomfortable surroundings, can occur and;

- mental distractions, such as being preoccupied with other matters and developing a response, rather than listening, create barriers to understanding.

Because of these barriers, and because both parties engaged in a communication encounter may be simultaneously sending information both orally and nonverbally, it can be very challenging to ensure that the information is received as intended. For this reason, it is particularly important to check for understanding rather than assume that it has taken place, particularly when communicating important messages to audiences that are less familiar to us.

You can surely compile a list of other barriers that affect your ability to communicate with friends, instructors, coworkers, supervisors, and others. By being aware of them, you can concentrate on removing these interferences.

1-3 COMMUNICATING WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

In order to be successful, organizations must create an environment that energizes and encourages employees to accomplish tasks by promoting genuine openness and effective communication.

interferences also called *barriers*; numerous factors that hinder the communication process

Organizational communication is communication that occurs with an organizational context. Regardless of your career or level within an organization, your ability to communicate will affect not only the success of the organization but also your personal success and advancement within that organization.

1-3a Communication Flow in Organizations

Communication occurs in a variety of ways within an organization. Some communication flows are planned and structured, others are not. Some communication flows can be formally depicted, whereas some defy description.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

Communication within an organization involves both formal and informal networks.

- **Formal communication network**. This channel is typified by the formal organizational chart, which is created by management to define individual and group relationships and to specify lines of responsibility. Essentially, the formal system is dictated by the managerial, technical, cultural, and structural environment of the organization. Within this system, people are required to behave and to communicate in certain ways simply to get work done.

- **Informal communication network**. This network, which is commonly called "the grapevine," continuously develops as people interact within the formal system to accommodate their social and psychological needs. Because the informal network undergoes continual changes and does not parallel the organizational chart, it cannot be depicted accurately by any graphic means.

The Formal Communication Network When employees rely almost entirely on the formal communication system as a guide to behavior, the system might be identified as a *bureaucracy*. Procedure manuals, job descriptions, organizational charts, and other written materials dictate the required behavior. Communication

FIGURE 1.3 THE OFFICE GRAPEVINE CARRIES INFORMAL MESSAGES

Jupiterimages/Stockbyte/Getty Images

channels are followed strictly, and red tape is abundant. Procedures are generally followed exactly; terms such as *rules* and *policies* serve as sufficient reasons for actions. Even the most formal organizations, however, cannot function long before an informal communication system emerges. As people operate within the organized system, they interact on a person-to-person basis and create an environment conducive to meeting their personal emotions, prejudices, likes, and dislikes.

In a workplace, employees are generally expected to satisfy a formal system of arriving at work on time, fulfilling their job duties, working well with others, and addressing their supervisor's requests. However, some employees may not openly accept these expectations and may arrive at work late and spend an undue amount of time "around the water cooler." If these informal practices become more widely spread, the purposes of the group may move from a focus on completing tasks to that of socializing with others or speculating about organizational events or activities. Obviously, the informal system benefits people because it meets their needs, but it also may affect the overall communication of the group in important ways.

organizational communication the movement of information within the company structure

formal communication network a network of communication flow typified by the formal organizational chart; dictated by the technical, political, and economic environment of the organization

informal communication network a network of communication flow that continuously develops as people interact within the formal system to accommodate their social and psychological needs

The Informal Communication Network As people talk casually during breaks, text one another, or chat online, the focus usually shifts from topic to topic. One of the usual topics is work—the company, supervisor, or fellow employees. Even though the formal system includes definite communication channels, the grapevine tends to develop and operate within all organizations. Consider these points related to the accuracy and value of grapevine communication:

- As a communication network, the grapevine has a reputation for being speedy but inaccurate. In the absence of alarms, the grapevine might be the most effective way to let occupants know that the building is on fire. It certainly beats sending an email.

- Although the grapevine often is thought of as a channel for inaccurate communication, in reality it is no more or less accurate than other channels. Even formal communication can become inaccurate and filtered as it passes from level to level in the organizational hierarchy.

- The inaccuracy of the grapevine has more to do with the message input than with the output. For example, the grapevine is noted as a carrier of rumors, primarily because it carries informal messages. If the input is a rumor, and nothing more, the output obviously will be inaccurate. But the output might be an accurate description of the original rumor.

- In a business office, news about promotions, personnel changes, company policy changes, and annual salary adjustments often is communicated through the grapevine long before being conveyed through formal channels. The process works similarly in colleges, where information about instructors typically is not officially published but is known by students, often through word-of-mouth. How best to prepare for examinations, instructor attitudes on attendance and homework, and even faculty personnel changes are messages that travel over the grapevine.

- A misconception about the grapevine is that the message passes from person to person until it finally reaches a person who can't pass it on: the end of the line. Actually, the grapevine works as a network channel. Typically, one person tells two or three others, who each tell two or three others, who each tell two or three others, and so on. Thus, the message might spread to a huge number of people in a short time,

especially now that the grapevine includes digital forms of communication, such as social networking sites.

- The grapevine has no single, consistent source. Messages might originate anywhere and follow various routes.

Due at least in part to widespread downsizing and corporate scandals during the last few years, employees in many organizations are demanding that they be better informed. Some companies have implemented new formal ways, such as newsletters and intranets, as well as informal ways, including blogs, wikis, Twitter, and other social networking platforms, for sharing information with their internal constituents. Company openness with employees about management decisions, process changes, and financial issues means conveying more information through the formal system rather than risking its miscommunication through informal channels. Online eyewear retailer Warby Parker, for example, grew from a small start-up to a 300-employee company in just three years. In order to keep the lines of communication open, the company has an "Ask Anything" segment of its weekly meetings, in which employees can ask anything. The Warby Parker Wiki enables employees to add notes from meetings, key lessons from the past or present, or team updates. The transparent company culture extends to each of its employees submitting weekly "happiness ratings" (on a 0 to 10 scale) and participating in quarterly, one-on-one, "360 reviews" in which brutal honesty is encouraged.[2]

An informal communication network will emerge from even the most carefully designed formal system. Managers who ignore this fact are attempting to manage blindfolded. Instead of denying or condemning the grapevine, the effective manager will learn to use the informal communication network. The grapevine, for instance, can be useful in counteracting rumors and false information.

DIRECTIONS OF COMMUNICATION FLOW

The direction in which communication flows in an organization can be downward, upward, or horizontal, as shown in Figure 1.4. Because these three terms are used frequently in communication discussions, they deserve clarification. Although the concept of flow seems simple, direction has meaning for those participating in the organizational communication process.

Downward Communication The communication that flows from supervisor to employee, from policy makers to operating personnel, or from top to bottom on the organizational chart is called **downward communication**. A simple policy statement from the top of the organization might grow into a formal plan for operation at lower levels. Teaching people how to

downward communication a type of communication that flows from supervisor to employee, from policy makers to operating personnel, or from top to bottom on the organizational chart

FIGURE 1.4 FLOW OF INFORMATION WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION

UPWARD COMMUNICATION

Progress reports (spoken and written)
- Results/accomplishments
- Problems/clarifications

DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION

Policies and procedures
Organizational goals and strategies
Work assignments
Employee development
- Job role/responsibility
- Performance appraisal (formal and informal)
- Constructive criticism
- Deserved praise and recognition

UPWARD COMMUNICATION

Ideas/suggestions
Feelings/attitudes

HORIZONTAL OR LATERAL COMMUNICATION

Coordination of interrelated activities
Problem-solving efforts

perform their specific tasks is an element of downward communication. Another element is orientation to a company's rules, practices, procedures, history, and goals. Employees learn about the quality of their job performance through downward communication.

Downward communication normally involves both written and spoken methods and makes use of the following assumptions:

DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION

▶ **People at high levels in the organization usually have greater knowledge of the organization's mission and goals than do people at lower levels.**

▶ **Both spoken and written messages tend to become larger as they move downward through organizational levels. This expansion results from attempts to prevent distortion and is more noticeable in written messages.**

▶ **Spoken messages are subject to greater changes in meaning than are written messages.**

When a supervisor sends a message to a subordinate employee who then asks a question or nods in agreement, the employee has given signs of feedback. Feedback can flow both downward and upward in organizational communication through traditional as well as informal channels.

Upward Communication The information that flows from the front lines of an organization to the top is **upward communication**. When management requests information from lower organizational levels, the resulting information becomes feedback to that request. Employees talk to supervisors about themselves, their fellow employees, their work and methods of doing it, customer needs and perceptions, and their own perceptions of the organization. These comments are commonly feedback in response to the downward flow transmitted in both spoken and written forms by group meetings, emails, procedures or operations manuals, company news releases, the company intranet, and the grapevine.

upward communication
a type of communication that is generally a response to requests from supervisors

UPWARD COMMUNICATION

▸ Upward communication is primarily feedback to the requests and actions of supervisors.

▸ Upward communication can be misleading because lower-level employees often tell their superiors what they think their superiors want to hear. Therefore, their messages might contradict their true observations and perceptions.

▸ Upward communication frequently involves risk to an employee and is dependent on his or her trust in the supervisor.

▸ Employees will reject superficial attempts by management to obtain feedback.

Although necessary and valuable, upward communication involves risks. The box above on Upward Communication, lists several important features to consider.

When effectively used, upward communication keeps management informed about the feelings of lower-level employees, taps the expertise of employees, helps management identify both difficult and potentially promotable employees, and paves the way for even more effective downward communication. Upward communication is key to keeping employees engaged and informed and is especially critical in tapping the power of younger employees who expect to collaborate rather than to be supervised.[3]

Horizontal Communication Horizontal, or lateral, communication describes interactions between organizational units on the same hierarchical level. These interactions reveal one of the major shortcomings of organizational charts: They do not recognize the role of horizontal communication when they depict authority relationships by placing one box higher than another and define role functions by placing titles in those boxes. Yet management should realize that horizontal communication is the primary means of achieving coordination in a functional organizational structure. Units coordinate their activities to accomplish task goals just as adjacent workers in a production line coordinate their activities. So for horizontal communication to be maximally effective, the people in any system or organization should be available to one another.

Many companies realize that the traditional hierarchy organized around functional units is inadequate for competing in increasingly competitive global markets. They value work teams that integrate work-flow processes rather than specialists in a single function or product. Such work teams can break down communication barriers between isolated functional departments, and communication patterns take on varying forms to accommodate team activities.

1-3b Levels of Communication

Communication can involve sending messages to both large and small audiences. **Internal messages** are intended for recipients within the organization. **External messages** are directed to recipients outside the organization. When considering the intended audience, communication can be described as taking place on five levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, and public. Figure 1.5 depicts the five audience levels. An effective communicator has a clearly defined purpose for each message, and has selected strategies for targeting his or her intended audience.

1-4 CONTEXTUAL FORCES INFLUENCING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

All communication occurs within a **context**, which is the situation or setting. Context can influence the content, the quality, and the effectiveness of a communication event. The effective communicator will recognize the importance of context, identify the contextual elements that will influence communication, and adjust his or her messages in response. Four important contextual forces influence the communication process today and help determine and define the nature of the communication

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horizontal (or lateral) communication
interactions between organizational units on the same hierarchical level

internal messages
messages intended for recipients within the organization

external messages
messages directed to recipients outside the organization

context a situation or setting in which communication occurs

FIGURE 1.5   LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication Levels	Examples
Intrapersonal • Communication within oneself • Not considered by some to be true communication as it does not involve a separate sender and receiver	*Individual considers how others respond to his or her verbal and/or nonverbal communication*
Interpersonal • Communication between two people • Task goal is to accomplish work confronting them • Maintenance goal is to feel better about themselves and each other because of their interaction	*Supervisor and subordinate, two coworkers*
Group • Communication among more than two people • Goal of achieving greater output than individual efforts could produce	*Work group, project team, department meeting*
Organizational • Groups combined in such a way that large tasks may be accomplished • Goal of providing adequate structure for groups to achieve their purposes	*Company, organization*
Public • The organization reaching out to its public to achieve its goals • Goal of reaching many with the same message	*Media advertisement, website communication, annual report*

FIGURE 1.6   FACTORS INFLUENCING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Legal and Ethical Constraints	Changing Technology	Diversity Challenges	Team Environment
• International Laws • Domestic Laws • Codes of Ethics • Stakeholder Interests • Ethical Frameworks • Personal Values	• Accuracy and Security Issues • Telecommunications • Software Applications • "High-Touch" Issues • Telecommuting • Databases	• Cultural Differences • Language Barriers • Gender Issues • Education Levels • Age Factors • Nonverbal Differences	• Trust • Team Roles • Shared Goals and Expectations • Synergy • Group Reward • Distributed Leadership

that should occur, as shown in Figure 1.6. These forces are legal and ethical constraints, diversity challenges, changing technology, and team environment.

1-4a Legal and Ethical Constraints

Legal and ethical constraints act as contextual or environmental forces on communication because they set boundaries in which communication rightfully occurs.

International, federal, state, and local laws affect the way that various business activities are conducted. For instance, laws specify that certain information must be stated in messages that reply to credit applications and those dealing with the collection of outstanding debts. Furthermore, one's own ethical standards will often influence what a person is willing to say in a message. For example, a system of ethics built on honesty might require that the message provide full disclosure rather

than a shrouding of the truth. Legal responsibilities, then, are the starting point for appropriate business communication. One's ethical belief system, or personal sense of right and wrong behavior, provides further boundaries for professional activity.

The press is full of examples of unethical conduct in business and political communities, but unethical behavior is not relegated to the papers—it has far-reaching consequences. Those affected by decisions, the **stakeholders**, can include people inside and outside the organization. Employees and stockholders are obvious losers when a company fails. Competitors in the same industry also suffer because their strategies are based on what they perceive about their competition. Beyond this, financial markets as a whole suffer due to the erosion of public confidence.

Business leaders, government officials, and citizens frequently express concern about the apparent erosion of ethical values in society. Even for those who want to do the right thing, matters of ethics are seldom clear-cut decisions of right versus wrong, and they often contain ambiguous elements. In addition, the pressure appears to be felt most strongly by lower-level managers, who are often recent business school graduates who are the least experienced at doing their jobs.

THE FOUNDATION FOR LEGAL AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Although ethics is a common point of discussion, many find defining ethics challenging. Most people immediately associate ethics with standards and rules of conduct, morals, right and wrong, values, and honesty. Dr. Albert Schweitzer defined *ethics* as "the name we give to our concern for good behavior. We feel an obligation to consider not only our own personal well-being, but also that of others and of human society as a whole."[4] In other words, **ethics** refers to the principles of right and wrong that guide you in making decisions that consider the impact of your actions on others as well as yourself.

Although the recorded accounts of legal and ethical misconduct would seem to indicate that businesses are dishonest and unscrupulous, keep in mind that millions of business transactions are made daily on the basis of honesty and concern for others. Why should a business make ethical decisions? What difference will it make? Johan Karlstrom, global chief executive officer of construction giant Skanska, gave a powerful reply to these questions:

> **When you understand that profits and a strong values base go together then you have a company that employees are so proud of. We want our team to feel that they're doing something that has a higher meaning, that they feel like "I'm part of something bigger, part of a bigger puzzle driving society in a positive direction."[5]**

CAUSES OF ILLEGAL AND UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Understanding the major causes of illegal and unethical behavior in the workplace will help you become sensitive to signals of escalating pressure to compromise your values. Unethical corporate behavior can have a number of causes:

- **Excessive emphasis on profits.** Business managers are often judged and paid on their ability to increase business profits. This emphasis on profits might send a message that the end justifies the means.

- **Misplaced corporate loyalty.** A misplaced sense of corporate loyalty might cause an employee to do what seems to be in the best interest of the company, even if the act is illegal or unethical.

- **Obsession with personal advancement.** Employees who wish to outperform their peers or are working for the next promotion might feel that they cannot afford to fail. They might do whatever it takes to achieve the objectives assigned to them.

- **Expectation of not getting caught.** Thinking that the end justifies the means, employees often believe illegal or unethical activity will never be discovered. Unfortunately, a great deal of improper behavior escapes detection in the business world. Believing no one will ever find out, employees are tempted to lie, steal, and perform other illegal acts.

- **Unethical tone set by top management.** If top managers are not perceived as highly ethical, lower-level managers might be less ethical as a result. Employees have little incentive to act legally and ethically if their superiors do not set an example and encourage and reward such behavior. The saying "The speed of the leader is the speed of the pack" illustrates the importance of leading by example.

stakeholders people inside and outside the organization who are affected by decisions

ethics the principles of right and wrong that guide one in making decisions that consider the impact of one's actions on others as well as on the decision maker

- **Uncertainty about whether an action is wrong.** Many times, company personnel are placed in situations in which the line between right and wrong is not clearly defined. When caught in this gray area, the perplexed employee asks, "How far is too far?"

- **Unwillingness to take a stand for what is right.** Often employees know what is right or wrong but are not willing to take the risk of challenging a wrong action. They might lack the confidence or skill needed to confront others with sensitive legal or ethical issues. They might remain silent and then justify their unwillingness to act.

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Determining whether an action is ethical can be difficult. Learning to analyze a dilemma from both legal and ethical perspectives will help you find a solution that

| FIGURE 1.7 | FOUR DIMENSIONS OF BUSINESS BEHAVIOR |

DIMENSION 1 Behavior that is illegal and unethical	DIMENSION 2 Behavior that is illegal yet ethical
DIMENSION 3 Behavior that is legal yet unethical	DIMENSION 4 Behavior that is both legal and ethical
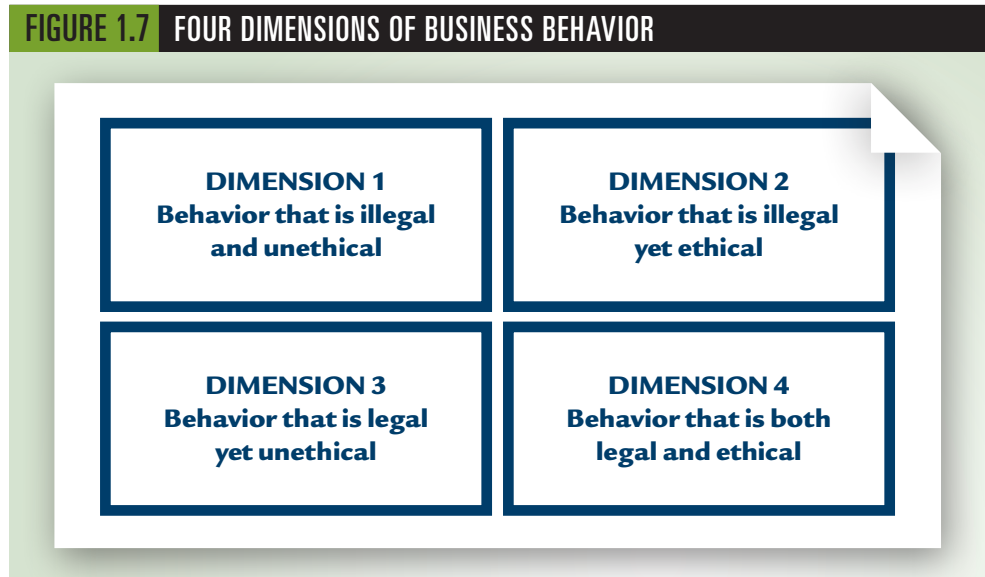
conforms to your own personal values. Figure 1.7 shows the four conclusions you might reach when considering the advisability of a particular behavior.

Dimension 1: Behavior that is illegal and unethical When considering some actions, you will reach the conclusion that they are both illegal and unethical. The law specifically outlines the "black" area—those alternatives that are clearly wrong—and your employer will expect you to become an expert in the laws that affect your particular area. When you encounter an unfamiliar

ETHICAL DILEMMAS ...

Identifying ethical issues in typical workplace situations can be difficult, and coworkers and superiors might apply pressure for seemingly logical reasons. To illustrate, examine each of the following workplace situations for a possible ethical dilemma:

▸ In order to achieve profit expectations, a stockbroker hides the financial risk of an investment product from potential clients.

▸ To prevent an adverse effect on stock prices, corporate officers deliberately withhold information concerning a possible corporate takeover.

▸ To protect the organization, management decides not to publicize a design flaw in an automobile that could lead to possible injury and even death to consumers, because the announcement might result in legal action.

▸ A supervisor takes advantage of his position and threatens an employee with dismissal if she does not acquiesce to his inappropriate requests and language use.

▸ Angry because of an unfavorable performance appraisal of a colleague, an employee leaks confidential information to the colleague that creates distrust among others in the department and results in a lawsuit.

Your fundamental morals and values provide the foundation for making ethical decisions. However, as the previous examples imply, even seemingly minor concessions in day-to-day decisions can gradually weaken an individual's ethical foundation.
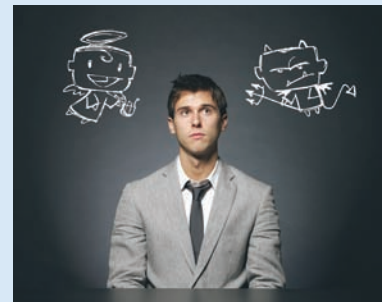
area, you must investigate any possible legal implications. Obviously, obeying the law is in the best interest of all concerned: you as an individual, your company, and society. Contractual agreements between two parties also offer guidance for legal decision making. Frequently, your own individual sense of right and wrong will also confirm that the illegal action is wrong for you personally. In such situations, decisions about appropriate behavior are obvious.

Dimension 2: Behavior that is illegal yet ethical

Occasionally, a businessperson will decide that even though a specific action is illegal, there is a justifiable reason to break the law. A case in point is a law passed in Vermont that makes it illegal for a pharmaceutical company to give any gift valued at more than $25 to doctors or their personnel.[6] Those supporting the law charge that the giving of freebies drives up medical costs by encouraging doctors to prescribe new, more expensive brand-name drugs. The law's opponents contend that the gifts do not influence doctors and are merely educational tools for new products. Although a pharmaceutical firm and its employees might see nothing wrong with providing gifts worth in excess of $25, they would be well advised to consider the penalty of $10,000 per violation before acting on their personal ethics. A better course of action would be to act within the law, possibly while lobbying for a change in the law.

Dimension 3: Behavior that is legal yet unethical

If you determine that a behavior is legal and complies with relevant contractual agreements and company policy, your next step is to consult your company's or profession's *code of ethics*. This written document summarizes the company's or profession's *standards of ethical conduct*. Some companies refer to this document as a *credo*. If the behavior does not violate the code of ethics, then put it to the test of your own personal integrity. You may at times reject a legal action because it does not "feel right." Most Americans were appalled to learn that the marketing of sub-prime loans packaged as reputable securities has been blamed for causing the "Great Recession." Although they might have acted legally, their profiting at the expense of company employees, stockholders, and the public hardly seemed ethical. You might be faced with situations in which you reject a behavior that is legal because you would not be proud to have your family and community know that you engaged in it.

Dimension 4: Behavior that is both legal and ethical

Decisions in this dimension are easy to make. Such actions comply with the law, company policies, and your professional and personal codes of ethics.

The Pagano Model offers a straightforward method for determining whether a proposed action is advisable.[7] For this system to work, you must answer the following six questions honestly:

1. Is the proposed action legal? (This is the core starting point.)
2. What are the benefits and costs to the people involved?
3. Would you want this action to be a universal standard, appropriate for everyone?
4. Does the action pass the light-of-day test? That is, if your action appeared on television or others learned about it, would you be proud?
5. Does the action pass the Golden Rule test? That is, would you want the same to happen to you?
6. Does the action pass the ventilation test? Ask the opinion of a wise friend with no investment in the outcome. Does this friend believe the action is ethical?

1-4b Diversity Challenges

Diversity in the workplace is another force influencing communication. Differences between the sender and the receiver in areas such as culture, age, gender, and education require sensitivity on the part of both parties so that the intended message is the one that is received.

Understanding how to communicate effectively with people from other cultures has become more integral to the work environment as many US companies are increasingly conducting business with international companies or becoming multinational. Even *when* a person can communicate, it may differ in other countries. For example, France's administrative court recently ruled that tech workers' right to health and rest was not sufficiently protected by existing laws. What this means is that a tech worker in France can choose to not check his work email during his legally mandated rest period and not face retribution.[8] For Americans, who may not think of "unplugging," these cultural differences might require adjustments to their communication expectations.

When addressing cultural differences, successful communication must often span barriers of language and differing worldviews resulting from societal and religious beliefs and practices. When a person fails to consider these factors, communication suffers, and the result is often embarrassing and potentially costly. To be successful on an international scale, managers need to be aware of cultural differences and be willing to work to ensure that effective communication occurs despite these barriers.

Cultural blunders aren't limited to international communication situations, however. In April 2015, Clorox tweeted about Apple's new emoji; they sent out a picture of a bottle of Clorox made up of emoji with the text: "The new emoji are alright, but where's the bleach?" The problem was that the new round of emoji included, for the first time, racially diverse emoji. iOS now gives users the ability to pick different skin tones and hair colors for anything from a thumbs up to a simple face. The result was that Clorox's tweet sounded racist, and the company deleted the tweet[9]. This example shows how much homework is involved in maintaining good relations with customers or clients from other cultures, and the danger of instantaneous messaging. The potential barrier of language is obvious in international situations; however, successful communicators know that much more is involved when interacting across cultures, genders, ages, abilities, and other differences, regardless of national boundaries.

COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN DIVERSITY

As world markets continue to expand, US employees at home and abroad will be doing business with more people from other countries. You might find yourself working abroad for a large American company, an international company with a plant in the United States, or a company with an ethnically diverse workforce. Regardless of the workplace, your **diversity skills**—that is, your ability to communicate effectively with both men and women of all ages, cultures, and minority groups—will affect your success in today's culturally diverse global economy.

Workplace diversity can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunications, but it also poses opportunities to improve both workers and organizations. Employees must be prepared to communicate effectively with workers of different nationalities, genders, races, ages, abilities, and other characteristics.

Being a part of a diverse workforce will require you to communicate with *everyone* and to support colleagues in reaching their fullest potential and contributing to the company's goals. To lessen miscommunication, which inevitably occurs, increasing numbers of companies have undertaken *diversity initiatives* and are providing diversity training seminars to help workers understand and appreciate gender and age differences and the cultures of coworkers.

CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

The way messages are decoded and encoded is not just a function of the experiences, beliefs, and assumptions of the person sending or receiving those messages but also is shaped by the society in which he or she lives.

People learn patterns of behavior from their culture. The *culture* of a people is the product of their living experiences within their own society. Culture could be described as "the way of life" of a people and includes a vast array of behaviors and beliefs. These patterns affect how people perceive the world, what they value, and how they act. Differing patterns can also create barriers to communication.

BARRIERS TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Because cultures give different definitions of such basics of interaction as values and norms, people raised in two different cultures can clash in various ways.

- **Ethnocentrism.** Problems occur between people of different cultures primarily because people tend to assume that their own cultural norms are the right way to do things. They wrongly believe that the specific patterns of behavior desired in their own cultures are universally valued. This belief, known as **ethnocentrism**, is certainly natural; but learning about other cultures and developing sensitivity will help minimize ethnocentric reactions when dealing with other cultures.

- **Stereotypes.** We often form a mental picture of the main characteristics of another group, creating preformed ideas of what people in this group are like. These pictures, called **stereotypes**, influence the way we interact with members of the other group. When we observe a behavior that conforms to the stereotype, the validity of the preconceived notion is reinforced. We often view the other person as a representative of a class of people rather than as an individual. People of all cultures have stereotypes about other cultural groups they have encountered. These stereotypes can interfere with communication when people interact on the basis of the imagined representative and not the real individual.

- **Interpretation of time.** The study of how a culture perceives time and its use is called **chronemics**. In the United States, we have a saying that "time is money." Canadians,

diversity skills the ability to communicate effectively with both men and women of all ages, cultures, and minority groups

ethnocentrism the assumption that one's own cultural norms are the right way to do things

stereotypes mental pictures that one group forms of the main characteristics of another group, creating preformed ideas of what people in this group are like

chronemics the study of how a culture perceives time and its use

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like some northern Europeans who are also concerned about punctuality, make appointments, keep them, and complete them, and waste no time in the process. In some other cultures, time is the cheapest commodity and an inexhaustible resource; time represents a person's span on Earth, which is only part of eternity. To these cultures, engaging in long, casual conversations prior to serious discussions or negotiations is time well spent in establishing and nurturing relationships. On the other hand, the time-efficient American businessperson is likely to fret about wasting precious time.

- **Personal space requirements.** Space operates as a language just as time does. The study of cultural space requirements is known as **proxemics**. In all cultures, the distance between people functions in communication as "personal space" or "personal territory." In the United States, for example, for intimate conversations with close friends and relatives, individuals are willing to stay within about a foot and a half of each other; for casual conversations, up to two or three feet; for job interviews and personal business, four to twelve feet; and for public occasions, more than twelve feet. However, in many cultures outside the United States, closer personal contact is accepted, or greater distance might be the norm.

- **Nonverbal communication.** Nonverbal communication is not universal, but, instead, is learned from one's culture. Even the most basic gestures have varying cultural meanings—the familiar North American symbol for "okay" means zero in France, money in

proxemics the study of cultural space requirements

Japan, and an expression of vulgarity in Brazil. Similarly, eye contact, posture, facial expressions, and use of space and time carry different meanings throughout the world.

- **Translation limitations.** Words in one language do not always have an equivalent meaning in other languages, and the concepts the words describe are often different as well. Translators can be helpful, but keep in mind that a translator is working with a second language and must listen to one language, mentally cast the words into another language, and then speak them. This process is difficult and opens the possibility that the translator will fall victim to one or more cultural barriers. Even if you cannot speak or write another language fluently, people from other cultures will appreciate simple efforts to learn a few common phrases.

DEVELOPING CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

One way to improve your ability to communicate with those from other cultures is to develop your *cultural intelligence*. Cultural intelligence can be defined as "a person's capability to adapt as he or she interacts with others from different cultural regions."[10] There are three elements of cultural intelligence:

- Cognitive knowledge: The possession of a wide ranging information base about a variety of people and their cultural customs.

- Motivation: Healthy self-efficacy, persistence, goals, value questioning, and integration.

- Behavioral adaptability: The capacity to interact in a wide range of situations, environments, and diverse groups.

The global literacy competence (GLC) model offers a road map to begin the conceptualization of the stages of cultural intelligence development (see Figures 1.9 and 1.11). The GLC assumes that ascending to a higher level of global functioning is not only possible but also required for excellence in a cross-cultural environment. To do so requires a commitment to personal growth, openness, and continuous learning about other cultures and customs.
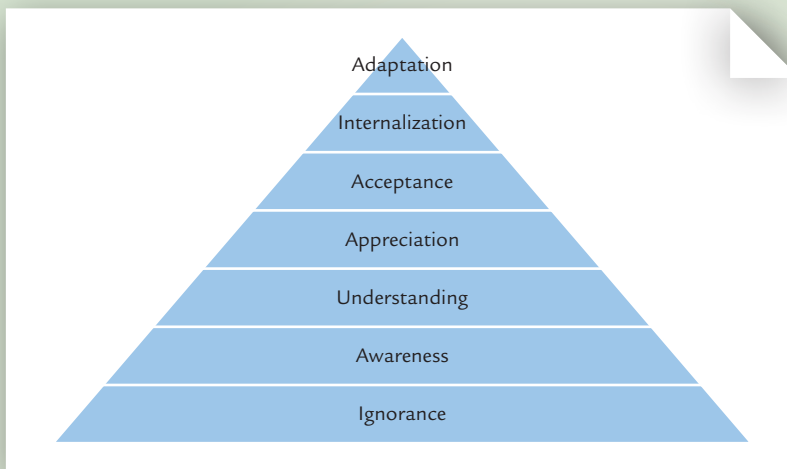
Source: C. O. Chin, J. Gu, and S. Tubbs. (2001). Developing global leadership competencies. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7(4): 20–35.

FIGURE 1.10 IT'S CRITICAL IN BUSINESS TO DEVELOP A CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE.

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A related concept, "cultural competence," has various definitions, but generally applies similar characteristics to organizations, agencies, or a set of professionals. Cultural competence requires that organizations have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively across cultures. Like cultural intelligence, cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period. Both individuals and organizations are at various levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills along the cultural competence continuum.

Cultural incompetence in the business community can damage an individual's self-esteem and career, but the unobservable psychological impact on the victims can go largely unnoticed until the threat of a class action suit brings them to light.

Five essential elements contribute to a system's, institution's, or agency's ability to become more culturally competent. These include:

1. Valuing diversity
2. Having the capacity for cultural self-assessment
3. Being conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact
4. Having institutionalized cultural knowledge
5. Having developed adaptations to service delivery reflecting an understanding of cultural diversity.[11] These five elements should be manifested at every level of an organization, including policy making, administrative, and practice. Further, these elements should be reflected in the attitudes, structures, policies, and services of the organization.

1-4c Changing Technology

Electronic tools create opportunities that range from new kinds of communications to improving the quality of the messages themselves. Electronic tools, such as the Internet, intranets, document production software, multimedia presentations, web publishing tools, and email, can help people in various ways, such as by (1) collecting and analyzing data, (2) shaping messages to be clearer and more effective, and (3) communicating quickly and efficiently with others in geographically dispersed locations.

FIGURE 1.11 LEVELS OF GLOBAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Level	Description
Awareness	This is the novice stage; with exposure come vague impressions. They are brief sensations of which people are barely conscious. At this level, there is little or no sense-making, but a dawning awareness of something different and possibly interesting, strange, frightening, or annoying.
Understanding	At this stage individuals begin to exhibit some conscious effort to learn why people are the way they are and why people do what they do. They display interest in those who are different from themselves. Sanchez et al. (2000) refer to this as the "transition stage." This is a stage whereby the individual collects information through reading, observation, and real experiences as well as by asking questions to learn more about the new cultural phenomenon.
Appreciation	Individuals begin to take a "leap of faith" and experience a genuine tolerance of different points of view. Through understanding the basic differences as well as areas where one thinks, acts, and reacts similarly, a positive feeling towards the "new" cultural phenomenon begins to form. Individuals not only put up with the "new" culture but also display a genuine appreciation of and, in some cases, preference for certain aspects of the "new" culture.
Acceptance	In this stage, the possibility of interaction between cultures increases appreciably. People are more sophisticated both in terms of recognizing commonalities and in terms of effectively dealing with differences. At this stage, there is the willingness to acquire new patterns of behavior and attitudes. This is a departure from the ethnocentric notion that "my way is the best way and the only way."
Internalization	At this stage, the individual goes beyond making sense of information and actually embarks on a deliberate internalization process, with profound positive feelings for the once unknown cultural phenomenon. At this stage, there is a clear sense of self-understanding leading to readiness to act and interact with the locals/nationals in a natural, appropriate, and culturally effective manner.
Adaptation	Cultural competence becomes a way of life. It is internalized, to the degree that it is out of one's consciousness, thus it becomes effortless and second nature. Individuals at this level display and possess (1) The capacity for gathering knowledge about different cultures, (2) drive or motivation, and (3) behavioral adaptability—the capacity to act effectively based upon their knowledge and motivation.

Source: C. O. Chin, J. Gu, and S. Tubbs. (2001). Developing global leadership competencies. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7(4): 20–35.

Using various communication technologies, individuals can often work in their homes or other remote locations and send and receive work from the company office electronically. **Telecommuting** (also referred to as *teleworking*) offers various advantages, including reduced travel time and increased work flexibility. Laptops and smartphones provide computing power and connectivity for professionals wherever they are. Although the public Internet is accessible to everyone and offers a wide array of information, organizations are establishing intranets, which can be understood as a private analog of the Internet, or as a private extension of the Internet confined to a particular organization. An intranet is a computer network that uses Internet Protocol technology to share information, operational systems, or computing services within an organization. Increasingly, intranets are being used to deliver tools, for example, for collaboration (to facilitate working in groups and teleconferencing) or sophisticated corporate directories, sales and customer relationship management tools, and project management for the advancement of productivity.

Intranets are also being used as corporate culture-change platforms. For example, large numbers of employees discussing key issues in an intranet forum

telecommuting also called *teleworking*; working at home or other remote locations and sending and receiving work from the company office electronically

application could lead to new ideas in management, productivity, quality, and other corporate issues. When part of an intranet is made accessible to customers and others outside the business, that segment becomes part of an extranet, or a network between organizations.

A related development is the growing use of **social media** in organizations. Social media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Social media depends on mobile and Web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. It introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals. In a business context, social media provides opportunities to engage in marketing research, communication, sales promotions/discounts, and relationship development/loyalty programs. Other popular technological developments are being incorporated into the work world, including tools based on gaming. For example, "gamification" is being used to turn the, at times, tedious task of training into a fun and motivating opportunity. By giving employees goals to reach and levels to achieve, gamification of training programs can increase their interest in completing training assignments. "You could send people on scavenger hunts. You could tell people they have to go out into the organization to discover things and then report back on what they've learned," explains Bill Cushard, head of training at ServiceRocket. Gamification can give employees a goal to reach, an excuse to meet more of their colleagues, and a chance to learn about different areas of the organization.

With today's technological advances, people can work together even when they are physically in different locations. A **virtual team** consists of three or more people who collaborate from different physical locations, perform interdependent tasks, have shared responsibility for the outcome of the work, and rely on some form of technology to communicate with one another. A phone line, fiber-optic cable, wireless signal, satellite signal, or other technology connects people who are communicating in a virtual team. Although technology seems to be a pervasive and revolutionary fact of life—in both our personal and our professional lives—communication researchers predict that technology will play an even larger role in how we collaborate with one another in the future. (Working in virtual teams is discussed more fully in the next section.)

Although many benefits are provided through the use of technology in organizations, challenges or risks also must be recognized. Knowing how to "tunnel" through the vast amounts of irrelevant information available on the digital highway in order to find what you want can be overwhelming. The experience can also be expensive in terms of human time spent and charges incurred for online time. Locating information from electronic sources requires that you know the search procedures and methods for constructing an effective search strategy. There are also possible legal liabilities that can arise from improper use of technological resources.

Effective use of various communication technologies helps ensure timely, targeted messages and responses and helps build interpersonal relationships. This responsiveness leads to positive interactions with colleagues and strong customer commitment.

1-4d Team Environment

As firms around the world face problems of decreasing productivity, faltering product quality, and worker dissatisfaction, work teams are seen as a way to help firms remain globally competitive. Decentralized decision making enables teams of people to communicate in a peer-to-peer fashion, rather than following traditional lines of authority; and new technologies give employees the ability to communicate easily and openly with one another and with those outside the firm.

Although worker involvement in the management process has long been the hallmark of Japanese business, many businesses in the United States and elsewhere are empowering self-directed work teams to accomplish various assignments.[12] The list of companies using self-directed work teams is diverse, including Hunt-Wesson, Federal Express, Kraft Foods, Inc., Hewlett-Packard, Southwest Airlines, Toyota, Motorola, General Electric, and Corning.

WORK TEAM DEFINED

The terms *team*, *work team*, *group*, *work group*, *cross-functional team*, and *self-directed team* are often used interchangeably.[13] Whatever the title, a **team** is a small number of people with complementary

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social media a group of Internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content

virtual team three or more people who collaborate from different physical locations, perform interdependent tasks, have shared responsibility for the outcome of the work, and rely on some form of technology to communicate with one another

team a small number of people with complementary skills who work together for a common purpose

LEGAL AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TECHNOLOGY

In addition to its many benefits, technology poses some challenges for the business communicator. For instance, technology raises issues of ownership, as in the case of difficulties that arise in protecting the copyright of documents transmitted over the Internet. Technology poses dilemmas over access, that is, who has the right to certain stored information pertaining to an individual or a company.

Technology threatens our individual privacy, our right to be left alone, free from surveillance or interference from other individuals or organizations. Common invasions of privacy caused by technology include:

▶ monitoring your Internet use, infiltrating your information, and sending advertising based on your browsing history;

▶ monitoring the exact time employees spend on a specific task and between tasks and the exact number and length of breaks, and supervisors' or coworkers' reading of another employee's email and computer files; and

▶ spreading of spyware and various computer "bugs" through the Internet.[14]

skills who work together for a common purpose. Team members set their own goals, in cooperation with management, and plan how to achieve those goals and how their work is to be accomplished. The central organizing element of a team is that it has a common purpose and measurable goals for which the team can be held accountable, independent of its individual members. Employees in a self-directed work team handle a wide array of functions and work with a minimum of direct supervision.[15]

Some major strengths of teams are as follows:[16]

- Teams make workers happier by causing them to feel that they are shaping their own jobs.

- Teams increase efficiency by eliminating layers of managers whose job was once to pass orders downward.

- Teams enable a company to draw on the skills and imagination of a whole workforce.

A key element in team success is the concept of **synergy**, defined as a situation in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Teams provide a depth

synergy a situation in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts

of expertise that is unavailable at the individual level. Teams open lines of communication that then lead to increased interaction among employees, and between employees and management. The result is that teams help companies reach their goals of delivering higher-quality products and services faster and with more cost-effectiveness.

COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES IN WORK TEAMS

In the past, most businesses were operated in a hierarchical fashion, with most decisions made at the top and communication following a top-down/bottom-up pattern. Communication patterns are different in successful team environments as compared with traditional organizational structures:

- Trust building is the primary factor that changes the organization's communication patterns.

- Open meetings are an important method for enhancing communication, as they educate employees about the business while building bridges of understanding and trust.

- Shared leadership, which involves more direct and effective communication between management and its internal customers, is common.

To improve group communication, time needs to be set aside to assess the quality of interaction. Questions to pose about the group process might include the following:

Is the group dealing with conflict in a positive way?

What in the group process is going well?

What roles are members playing? For instance, is one person dominating while others contribute little or nothing?

What are our common goals?

What about the group process could be improved?

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- Listening, problem solving, conflict resolution, negotiation, and consensus become important factors in group communication.
- Information flows vertically up to management and down to workers, as well as horizontally among team members, other teams, and supervisors.

Communication is perhaps the single most important aspect of successful teamwork. Open lines of communication increase interaction between employees and management. All affected parties should be kept informed as projects progress.

MAXIMIZING WORK TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Grouping employees into a team structure does not mean that they will automatically function as a team. A group must go through a developmental process to begin to function as a team. Members need training in such areas as problem solving, goal setting, and conflict resolution. Teams must be encouraged to establish the "three Rs"—roles, rules, and relationships.[17]

The self-directed work team can become the basic organizational building block to best ensure success in dynamic global competition. Skills for successful participation in team environments are somewhat different from those necessary for success in old-style organizations. Today successful business communicators and team members must possess the ability to

- give and take constructive criticism, actively listen, clearly impart one's views to others, and provide meaningful feedback;
- break down emotional barriers, such as insecurity or condescension;
- promote team functioning by removing process barriers, such as rigid policies and procedures;
- understand the feelings and needs of coworkers so members feel comfortable stating their opinions and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the team;
- overcome cultural barriers, such as stereotyped roles and responsibilities, that can separate workers from management and;[18]
- apply leadership skills in a dynamic group setting that results in team success. In dynamic team leadership, referred to as *distributed leadership*, the role of the leader can alternate among members, and more than one leadership style can be active at any given time.[19]

Although diversity is generally beneficial to group decision making, such differences—gender, cultural, and age, for example—can present challenges to team

FIGURE 1.13 CHARACTERISTICS OF DEFENSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION CLIMATES

Defensive

1. Evaluation. To pass judgment on another.

2. Control. To try to do something to another; to try to change behavior or attitudes of others.

3. Strategy. To manipulate another, to engage in multiple or ambiguous motivations.

4. Neutrality. To express a lack of concern for the other; the clinical, person-as-object-of-study attitude.

5. Superiority. To communicate that you are superior in position, wealth, intelligence, and so on, to arouse feelings of inadequacy in others.

6. Certainty. To seem to know the answers and be dogmatic wanting to win an argument rather than solve a problem; seeing one's ideas as truths to be defended.

Supportive

1. Description. Nonjudgmental. To ask questions, present feelings, refrain from asking the other to change his or her behavior.

2. Problem orientation. To convey a desire to collaborate in solving a mutual problem or defining it; to allow the other to set his or her goals.

3. Spontaneity. To express naturalness, free of deception; straightforwardness; uncomplicated motives.

4. Empathy. To respect the other person and show it; to identify with his or her problems; to share his or her feelings.

5. Equality. To be willing to enter into participative planning with mutual trust and respect; to attach little importance to differences of worth, status, and so on.

6. Provisionalism. To be willing to experiment with your own behavior; to investigate issues rather than taking sides; to solve problems, not debate.

Source: Jack Gibb. (1961). Defensive communication, *Journal of Communication*, 11: 141–48.

communication. Team members may need awareness training to assist them with dealing with the challenges presented by diversity as well as taking full advantage of its benefits.

VIRTUAL TEAMS

The convergence of the last three developments—globalization and increased reliance on technology and teams—has resulted in the increased use of a special kind of team—the virtual team. A virtual team is defined as "a group of geographically, organizationally and/or time dispersed workers brought together by information and telecommunication technologies to accomplish one or more organizational tasks."[20] Members of virtual teams communicate electronically and may never meet face-to-face.

There are six key differences between the way face-to-face teams and virtual teams collaborate, although, as technology becomes more pervasive these differences also will moderate. Face-to-face team members typically communicate at the same time and in the same place and because of this, there is a lesser degree of anonymity and with it, lesser potential for deception. Part of this is due to the fact that members have access to a wider range of

nonverbal cues, while those in virtual teams tend to rely more on written messages.

Virtual teams have the ability to communicate under four conditions: (1) same time/same place, (2) same time/different place, (3) different time/same place, and (4) different time/different place.

An asynchronous message is a message that is not read, heard, or seen at the same time you send the message; there is a time delay between when you send and receive a message. Sending a text message to someone who is not monitoring Facebook or leaving a voice message for someone are examples of asynchronous messages. Synchronous messages are those that occur instantly and simultaneously—there is no time delay between when you send a message and the other person receives it. A live video conference is an example of a synchronous message.

The more synchronous our interaction, the more similar it is to face-to-face interactions. The more a technology resembles a face-to-face conversation, the more social presence there is. Social presence is the feeling we have when we act and think as if we're involved in an unmediated, face-to-face conversation. The key

distinction among different forms of electronic messaging and the degree of social presence we experience is whether we feel we are in a synchronous interaction. When we send text messages back and forth or instant message with a group of people, we create a shared sense of social or psychological presence with our collaborators.

As with most technology-enabled developments, both advantages and disadvantages can result from virtual team use. Advantages include increased productivity, extended market opportunities, and improved knowledge transfer among employees across an organization.

Common disadvantages include reduced communication effectiveness caused by more limited access to various communication media, poor leadership, and incompetent team members. These disadvantages can be overcome through effective virtual team training, proper goal setting, team building, and successful coordination.

STUDY TOOLS 1

LOCATED AT THE BACK OF THE TEXTBOOK

- ☐ Tear-Out Chapter Review Card
- ☐ Grammar, Usage, and Style Appendices

ACCESSIBLE IN MINDTAP

- ☐ Review Key Term flashcards and create your own
- ☐ Complete the Aplia Chapter Assignment
- ☐ Test Your Knowledge with Practice Quizzes
- ☐ View chapter model documents
- ☐ Access supplemental grammar resources

2 | Focusing on Interpersonal and Group Communication

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to ...

2-1 Explain how behavioral theories about human needs, trust and disclosure, and motivation relate to business communication.

2-2 Describe the role of nonverbal messages in communication.

2-3 Identify aspects of effective listening.

2-4 Identify factors affecting group and team communication.

2-5 Discuss aspects of effective meeting management.

2-1 BEHAVIORAL THEORIES THAT IMPACT COMMUNICATION

Interpersonal intelligence pertains to the ability to read, empathize with, and understand others.[1] People with interpersonal intelligence are good with people and thrive in social interaction. Rather than being a quality that some are born with and others are not, interpersonal intelligence can be improved by broadening your understanding of human behavior and motivation and by practicing certain behaviors when in interpersonal situations. Knowledge from the fields of sociology and psychology is helpful to understanding human needs and providing you with valuable insights about how to achieve effective communication in the workplace.

2-1a Recognizing Human Needs

Psychologist Abraham Maslow developed the concept of a hierarchy of needs through which people progress. In our society, most people have reasonably satisfied their two lower-level needs: (1) physiological needs (food and basic provision) and (2) security and safety needs (shelter and protection from the elements and physical danger). Beyond these two basic need levels, people progress to satisfy the three upper-level needs: (3) social needs for love, acceptance, and belonging; (4) ego or esteem needs to be heard, appreciated, and wanted; and (5) self-actualizing needs, including the need to achieve one's fullest potential through professional, philanthropic, political, educational, and artistic channels.

As people satisfy needs at one level, they move on to the next. The levels that have been satisfied still are present, but their importance diminishes. Effective communicators are able to identify and appeal to need levels in various individuals or groups. Advertising is designed to appeal to need levels. Luxury car and dream vacation ads appeal to ego needs; teeth whitening and anti-aging products messages appeal to social needs; and identity theft, health and fitness, and environmentally friendly commercials appeal to security and safety needs. Efforts to help employees satisfy their needs

interpersonal intelligence the ability to read, empathize, and understand others

Westend61/Getty Images

are essential, since a satisfied worker is generally more productive than a dissatisfied one. In communication activities, a sender's message is more likely to appeal to the receiver if the receiver's need is accurately identified and addressed.

2-1b Stroking

People engage in communication with others in the hope that the outcome might lead to mutual trust, mutual pleasure, and psychological well-being. The communication exchange is a means of sharing information about things, ideas, tasks, and selves.

Each communication interaction, whether casual or formal, provides an emotional **stroke** that can have either a positive or a negative effect on your feelings about yourself and others. Getting a pat on the back from the supervisor, receiving a congratulatory phone call or text message, and being listened to by another person are examples of everyday positive strokes. Negative strokes might include receiving a hurtful comment, being avoided or left out of a conversation, and receiving a reprimand from a superior. By paying attention to the importance of strokes, managers can greatly improve

their communication, as well as people's feelings about their work.

2-1c Exploring the Johari Window

As relationships develop, the people involved continue to learn about each other and themselves, as shown by the Johari Window in Figure 2.1. Area I, the free or open area, represents what we know about ourselves and what others know about us. Area II, the blind area, designates those things others know about us but that we don't know about ourselves. For example, you are the only person who can't see your physical self as it really is. Things we know about ourselves but that others don't know about us occupy the hidden or secret area III. Area IV includes the unknown: things we don't know about ourselves, and others don't know about us, such as our ability to handle emergency situations if we've never been faced with them.

Each of the window areas can vary in size according to the degree

> **stroke** an emotional response one gets during a communication interaction that has either a positive or a negative effect on feelings about oneself and others

FIGURE 2.1 THE JOHARI WINDOW

	KNOWN TO SELF	NOT KNOWN TO SELF
KNOWN TO OTHERS	I Free or Open Area	II Blind Area
NOT KNOWN TO OTHERS	III Hidden Area	IV Unknown Area

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relationships with significant others, siblings, and parents, deeper, personal feelings are entrusted to each other.

The idea that trust and openness leads to better communication between two people also applies to groups. Managers engaged in *organizational development* (OD) are concerned with developing successful organizations by building effective small groups. They believe small-group effectiveness evolves mostly from a high level of mutual trust among group members. The aim of OD is to open emotional as well as task-oriented communication. To accomplish this aim, groups often become involved in encounter sessions designed to enlarge the open areas of the Johari Window.[2]

2-1d Contrasting Management Styles

Douglas McGregor, a management theorist, attempted to distinguish between the older, traditional view that workers are concerned only about satisfying lower-level needs, and the more contemporary view that productivity can be enhanced by assisting workers in satisfying higher-level needs. Under the older view, management exercised strong control, emphasized the job to the exclusion of concern for the individual, and sought to motivate solely through external incentives—a job and a paycheck. McGregor labeled this management style Theory X. Under the contemporary style, Theory Y, management strives to balance control and individual freedom. By treating the individual as a mature person, management lessens the need for external motivation; treated as adults, people will act as adults.

The situational leadership model developed by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard does not prescribe a single leadership style, but advocates that what is appropriate in each case depends on the follower (subordinate) and the task to be performed. **Directive behavior** is characterized by the leader's giving detailed rules and instructions and monitoring closely that they are followed. The leader decides what is to be done and how. In contrast, **supportive behavior** is characterized by the leader's listening, communicating, recognizing, and encouraging. Different degrees of directive and supportive behavior

to which we learn about ourselves and are willing to disclose things about ourselves to others. Reciprocal sharing occurs when people develop *trust* in each other. When a confidant demonstrates that he or she can be trusted, trust is reinforced and leads to an expansion of the open area on the Johari Window. Usually we are willing to tell people about various things that aren't truly personal. But we share personal thoughts, ambitions, and inner feelings only with selected others—those whom we have learned to trust. The relationships existing between supervisor and employee, doctor and patient, and lawyer and client are those of trust, but only in specific areas. In more intimate

directive behavior
characterized by leaders who give detailed rules and instructions and monitor closely that they are followed

supportive behavior
characterized by leaders who listen, communicate, recognize, and encourage their followers

can be desirable, given the situation.[3] Combining the ideas of Maslow and McGregor with those of Hersey and Blanchard leads to the conclusion that "the right job for the person" is a better philosophy than "the right person for the job."

The **total quality management** movement focuses on creating a more responsible role for the worker in an organization. In a total quality management environment, decision-making power is distributed to the people closest to the problem, who usually have the best information sources and solutions. Each employee, from the president to the custodian, is expected to solve problems, participate in team-building efforts, and expand the scope of his or her role in the organization. The goal of employee empowerment is to build a work environment in which all employees take pride in their work accomplishments and begin motivating themselves from within, rather than through traditional extrinsic incentives.[4] Managers of many companies understand that empowering employees to initiate continuous improvements is critical for survival. Only companies producing quality products and services will survive in today's world market.

Leadership studies have taken a new turn in recent years with the emergence of the social constructionist view of leadership. A social constructionist view sees leadership differently than the psychological approach to management discipline. A social constructionist view sees leadership as a co-constructed reality that emerges from the interaction of social actors. What this means is that certain leadership behaviors are acceptable to group members while others are not. Because of this, a person may position him- or herself as a leader, but others may not perceive these communication behaviors as corresponding with their perception of a leader.

From this perspective, the leader of a group may not be the formally appointed manager or, in certain situations, as discussed in Chapter 1, leadership may be distributed among team members. The value of this approach to leadership is its focus on the importance of communication practices in creating leadership.

2-2 NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Managers use verbal and nonverbal messages to communicate ideas to employees. *Verbal* means "through the use of words," either written or spoken. *Nonverbal* means "without the use of words." Although major attention in communication studies is given to verbal messages, studies show that nonverbal elements can account for more than 90% of the total meaning of a message.[5] Nonverbal communication includes *metacommunication* and *kinesic messages*.

2-2a Metacommunication

A **metacommunication** is a message that, although *not* expressed in words, accompanies a message that *is* expressed in words. For example, "Don't be late for work" communicates caution; yet the sentence might imply (but not express in words) such additional ideas as "You are frequently late, and I'm warning you," or "I doubt your dependability." "Your solution is perfect" might also convey a metacommunication such as "You are efficient," or "I certainly like your work." Whether you are speaking or writing, you can be confident that those who receive your messages will be sensitive to the messages expressed in words, and to the accompanying messages that are present but not expressed in words.

2-2b Kinesic Messages

People constantly send meanings through kinesic communication, which is an idea expressed through nonverbal behavior. In other words, receivers gain additional meaning from what they see and hear—the visual and the vocal:

- **Visual kinesic communication**—gestures, winks, smiles, frowns, sighs, attire, grooming, and all kinds of body movements.

- **Vocal kinesic communication**—intonation, projection, and resonance of the voice.

Following are some examples of kinesic messages and the meanings they can convey.

> **total quality management** focuses on creating a more responsible role for the worker in an organization by distributing decision-making power to the people closest to the problem, empowering employees to initiate continuous improvements
>
> **metacommunication** a nonverbal message that, although not expressed in words, accompanies a message that is expressed in words
>
> **visual kinesic communication** gestures, winks, smiles, frowns, sighs, attire, grooming, and all kinds of body movements
>
> **vocal kinesic communication** intonation, projection, and resonance of the voice

Action	Possible Kinesic Message
A wink or light chuckle follows a statement.	"Don't believe what I just said."
A manager is habitually late for staff meetings and with email replies.	"My time is more important than yours. You can wait for me." Alternately, the action might be ordinary for a manager not born in the United States.
A group leader sits at a position other than at the head of the table.	"I want to demonstrate my equality with other members."
An employee wears clothing that reveals tattoos, which violates the company's dress code.	"Rules are for other people; I can do what I want." Alternately, "I do not understand the expectations."
A job applicant submits a résumé containing errors.	"My language skills are deficient." Alternately, "I didn't care to do my best."

2-2c Other Nonverbal Messages

In addition to kinesics, proxemics, chronemics, and haptics are elements of nonverbal communication. **Proxemics**, or the study of human space, revolves around two concepts: territoriality and personal space. **Territoriality** refers to your need to establish and maintain certain spaces as your own. In a workplace environment, the walls of your cubicle or office often establish your territory. **Personal space** is the distance between you and others with which you feel comfortable. When someone invades your personal space, you often automatically move away from that person. However, personal space preferences can differ among people. For example, large people also usually prefer more space, as do men.

Similarly, personal space preferences differ by culture. People of the United States tend to need more space than those from Greece, Latin America, or the Middle East. The Japanese tend to prefer a greater distance in social situations than do people of the United States.

Cultural differences also extend to how people communicate through space in seating arrangements and the layout of offices. People in the United States, for example, prefer to converse face-to-face, while people in China prefer to sit side by side. This preference may allow them to avoid direct eye contact, which is the custom in that culture. In terms of the office environment, private offices have more status in the United States, while in Japan, only executives of the highest rank may have a private office, although it is just as likely that they have desks in large work areas. In the United States and

Germany, the top floor of office buildings is generally occupied by top-level executives, while in France, high-ranking executives occupy the middle of an office area with subordinates located around them.

Chronemics, or values related to time, refers to the way that people organize and use time and the messages that are created because of our organization and use of time. Our use of time communicates several messages. Our urgency or casualness with the starting time of an event could be an indication of our personality, our status, or our culture. Highly structured, task-oriented people may arrive and leave on time, whereas relaxed, relation-oriented people may arrive and leave late. People with low status are expected to be on time, while those with higher status are granted more leeway in their arrival time. Being on time is more important in some cultures than others; for example, being on time is more important in North America than in South America, whereas people of Germany and Switzerland are even more time-conscious than people from the United States.

Another cultural issue to recognize is whether a country follows **polychronic time (P-time)** or **monochronic time (M-time)**. Countries that follow polychronic time work on several activities simultaneously. In these cultures people are more important than schedules so they don't mind interruptions and are accustomed to doing several things at once. People in polychronic cultures borrow and lend things and tend to build lifelong relationships. People from high-context cultures—those that pay attention to context of communication—tend to be polychronic, including Latin America, the Middle East, and Southern Europe.

Countries that are monochronic in their time orientation include the United States, Germany, Switzerland, and England. In monochronic cultures, time is considered as something tangible, as is reflected in such sayings as "wasting time" and "time is money." Time is seen as linear and manageable in such cultures. It is considered rude to do two things at once, such as answering the phone while someone is in your office or stopping to text someone while in a conversation. However, with the prevalence of cell phones, this consideration is rapidly changing. Monochronic people tend to respect private property and rarely borrow or lend and are accustomed to short-term relationships.

Haptics, or touch, communicate a great deal. What is appropriate and people's tendency to touch differs by gender and culture. Studies indicate that women in the United States value touch more than men, women are touched more than men, men touch others more than women do, and men may use touch to indicate power or dominance.

People from different countries also handle touch differently. Sidney Jourard determined the rates of touch per hour among adults of various cultures. Adults in Puerto Rico touched 180 times per hour; those in Paris touched about 110 times an hour; those in Gainesville, Florida, touched 2 times per hour; and those in London touched once per hour.

In touch-oriented cultures, such as those of Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, both males and females may walk arm in arm or hold hands. In Mexico, Eastern Europe, and the Arab world, embracing and kissing is common. However, in Hong Kong, initiating any physical contact should be avoided.

Some cultures also restrict where touching may occur on the body. In India and Thailand, it is offensive to touch the head because it is considered sacred. In Korea, young people do not touch the shoulders of elders.

Your clothing and other adornments, such as jewelry, hairstyle, cosmetics, shoes, glasses, tattoos, and body piercings, communicate to others your age, gender, status, role, socioeconomic class, group memberships, personality, and relation to the opposite sex. Such cues also indicate the historical period, the time of day, and the climate. Clothing and other artifacts also communicate your self-concept or the type of person you believe you are. Conforming to current styles has been correlated to a person's desire to be accepted and liked by others.

Individuals believe that clothing is important in forming first impressions. Clothing has been shown to affect others' impressions of our status and personality traits. For this reason, most advise that you should pay attention to dressing professionally in business situations because it can affect your credibility, attractiveness, and perceived ability to fit within a professional culture. This rule can be particularly important when dealing with international audiences because they tend to make assumptions about another person's education level, status, and income based upon dress alone. Therefore, those who are interested in careers in international business should follow Molloy's rules for business dress: Clothing should be conservative, upper class, and traditional.

2-2d Understanding Nonverbal Messages

Nonverbal messages have characteristics that all communicators should take into account.

- **Nonverbal messages cannot be avoided.** Both written and spoken words convey ideas in addition to the ideas contained in the words used. All actions—and even the lack of action—have meaning to those who observe them.

- **Nonverbal messages can have different meanings for different people.** If a team member smiles after making a statement, one member might conclude that the speaker was trying to be funny; another might conclude that the speaker was pleased about having made such a great contribution; and another might see the smile as indicating friendliness.

- **Nonverbal messages vary between and within cultures.** Not only do nonverbal messages have different meanings from culture to culture, but men and women from the same culture typically exhibit different body language. As a rule, US men make less body contact with other men, than do women with other women. Acceptable male body language might include a handshake or a pat on the back, whereas women are afforded more flexibility in making body contact with each other.

- **Nonverbal messages can be intentional or unintentional.** "You are right about that" can be intended to mean "I agree with you" or "You are right on *this* issue, but you have been wrong on all others discussed."

- **Nonverbal messages can contradict the accompanying verbal message and affect whether your message is understood or believed.** The adage "actions speak louder than words" reveals much about how people perceive messages. Picture a person who says, "I'm happy to be here," but looks at the floor, talks in a weak and halting voice, and clasps his or her hands timidly in front of his or her body. Because his or her verbal and nonverbal messages are contradictory, his or her audience might not trust his or her words. Similarly, consider the negative effect of a sloppy personal appearance by a job candidate.

- **Nonverbal messages can receive more attention than verbal messages.** If a supervisor repeatedly glances at his smartphone for text messages, or rhythmically taps a pen while making a statement, the words might not register in the employee's mind. An error in basic grammar might receive more attention than the idea that is being transmitted.

- **Nonverbal messages provide clues about the sender's background, attitudes, and motives.** For example, excessive use of big words might suggest that a person reads widely or has an above-average education. It might also suggest a need for social recognition or insecurity about his or her social background.

- **Nonverbal messages are influenced by the circumstances surrounding the communication.** Assume that two men, Ganesh and Jacob, are friends at work. When they

are together on the job, Ganesh sometimes puts his hand on Jacob's shoulder. To Jacob, the act could mean nothing more than "We are close friends." But suppose Ganesh is a member of a committee that subsequently denies a promotion for Jacob. Afterward, the same act could mean "We are still friends," but it could also cause resentment. Because of the circumstances, the same act could now mean something such as "Watch the hand that pats; it can also stab."

- **Nonverbal messages can be beneficial or harmful.** Words or actions can be accompanied by nonverbal messages that help or hurt the sender's purpose. Nonverbal communications can convey such messages as "I am competent and considerate of others," or they can convey the opposite. They cannot be eliminated, but you can make them work for you instead of against you by recognizing their value and becoming more aware of them.

2-3 LISTENING AS A COMMUNICATION SKILL

Despite the fact that many professionals believe, incorrectly, that business communication is about presentation and not interaction, most employees spend a major part of their day listening to others. In fact, listening is our most used communication skill. In the corporate world, managers may devote more than 60% of their workday to listening to others.[6] Chief executives may spend as much as 75% of their communicating time listening.[7] Listening to supervisors, employees, customers, and colleagues commonly consumes more of employees' time than reading, writing, and speaking combined.

With smartphones, tablets, and 24/7 access to information, it is harder than ever to pay attention to something without a screen, let alone be an effective listener. But although people may be glued to their device of choice, listening is even more crucial to effective communication, and real knowledge. Learning not only happens by reading, researching, or through today's favorite shiny object—Big Data. True learning comes from *sharing* ideas through conversation, which involves being fully engaged in listening, business, and life. Only then can ideas evolve, leaders lead, and teams flourish. Strategist Peter Senge emphasizes the value of developing "learning organizations" to deal with

casual listening listening for pleasure, recreation, amusement, and relaxation

the rapid changes of a globalized world, and listening to others is a critical component of such an organization.[8]

Listening depends on your abilities to receive and decode both verbal and nonverbal messages. The best-devised messages and sophisticated communication systems will not work unless people on the receiving end of spoken messages actually listen.

2-3a Listening for a Specific Purpose

Individuals satisfy a variety of purposes through listening: (1) interacting socially, (2) receiving information, (3) solving problems, (4) sharing feelings with others, and (5) showing interest and resolving conflict. Listening is a more complex behavior than is typically acknowledged, with some suggesting more than two dozen different types. Each activity may call for a different style of listening or for a combination of styles.

- **Casual listening**. Listening for pleasure, recreation, amusement, and relaxation is casual listening. Some people listen to music all day long for relaxation and to mask unwanted sounds during daily routines, work periods, and daily commutes. Aspects of casual listening are as follows:

  ○ It provides relaxing breaks from more serious tasks and supports our emotional health.

EFFECTIVE LISTENING HABITS PAY OFF IN SEVERAL WAYS

▶ Good listeners are liked by others because they satisfy the basic human needs of being heard and being wanted.

▶ People who listen well are able to separate fact from fiction, cope effectively with false persuasion, and avoid having others use them for personal gain.

▶ Effective listening leads to sensitivity and tolerance toward key individuals who are critical to the organization's success, such as employees, customers, and suppliers.

▶ Effective listeners are engaged and constantly learning—gaining knowledge and skills that lead to increased creativity, job performance, advancement, and satisfaction.

▶ Job satisfaction increases when people know what is going on, when they are heard, and when they participate in the mutual trust that develops from good communication.

- It illustrates that people are selective listeners. You listen to what you want to hear. In a crowded room in which everyone seems to be talking, you can block out all the noise and engage in the conversation that you are having with someone.

- It doesn't require much emotional or physical effort.

- **Listening for information**. Listening for information involves the search for data or material. In a lecture class, for example, the instructor usually has a strategy for guiding the class to desired goals. The instructor will probably stress several major points and use supporting evidence to prove or to reinforce them. When engaged in this type of listening, you could become so focused on recording every detail that you take copious notes with no organization. When listening for information:

  - Use an outlining process to help you capture main ideas and supporting sub-points in a logical way.

  - Watch the speaker as you listen to him or her, because most speakers exhibit a set of mannerisms composed of gestures and vocal inflections to indicate the degree of importance or seriousness that they attach to portions of their presentations.

- **Intensive listening**. When you listen to obtain information, solve problems, or persuade or dissuade (as in arguments), you are engaged in intensive listening. Intensive listening involves greater use of your analytical ability to proceed through problem-solving steps. When listening intensively:

  - Become a good summarizer.

  - Trace the development of the discussion, and then move from there to your own analysis.

- **Active listening**. Active listening requires that the listener fully concentrates, understands, responds, and then remembers what is being said. It is useful when receiving important instructions, resolving conflict, and providing or receiving critical feedback. When listening actively:

  - Observe the speaker's behavior and body language. Having the ability to interpret a person's body language lets the listener develop a more accurate understanding of the speaker's message.

  - Paraphrase the speaker's words. In doing so, the listener is not necessarily agreeing with the speaker—simply stating what was said to ensure understanding.

- Ask questions as needed to ensure accurate understanding.

- **Empathetic listening**. *Empathy* occurs when a person attempts to share another's feelings or emotions. Counselors attempt to use empathetic listening in dealing with their clients, and good friends listen empathetically to each other. Empathy is a valuable trait developed by people skilled in interpersonal relations. When you take the time to listen to another, the courtesy is usually returned. When listening empathetically:

  - Avoid preoccupation with your own problems. Talking too much and giving strong nonverbal signals of disinterest destroy others' desire to talk.

  - Remember that total empathy can never be achieved simply because no two people are exactly alike. The more similar our experiences, however, the better the opportunity to put ourselves in the other person's shoes. Listening with empathy involves some genuine tact along with other good listening habits.

You might have to combine listening intensively, actively, and empathetically in some situations. Performance appraisal interviews, disciplinary conferences, and other sensitive discussions between supervisors and employees require listening intensively and actively in order to gain an accurate understanding of the message and background, as well as to understand feelings and preconceived points of view.

2-3b Bad Listening Habits

Most of us have developed bad listening habits in one or more of the following areas:

- **Faking attention**. Have you ever been introduced to someone only to realize 30 seconds later that you missed the name? We can look directly at a person, nod, smile, and *pretend* to be listening.

- **Allowing disruptions**. We welcome disruptions of almost any sort when we are engaged in somewhat difficult listening. The next time someone

listening for information listening that involves the search for data or material

intensive listening listening to obtain information, solve problems, or persuade or dissuade

active listening requires that the listener fully concentrates, understands, responds, and then remembers what is being said

empathetic listening listening to others in an attempt to share their feelings or emotions

enters your classroom or meeting room, notice how almost everyone in the room turns away from the speaker, and the topic, to observe the latecomer.

- **Over listening**. When we attempt to record many details in writing or in memory, we can *over listen* and miss the speaker's major points.

- **Stereotyping**. We make spontaneous judgments about others based on such issues as appearances, mannerisms, dress, and speech delivery. If a speaker doesn't meet our standards in these areas, we simply turn off our listening and assume the speaker can't have much to say.

- **Dismissing subjects as uninteresting**. People tend to use disinterest as a rationale for not listening. Unfortunately, the decision is usually made before the topic is ever introduced. A good way to lose an instructor's respect when you have to miss class is to ask, "Are we going to do anything important in class today?"

- **Failing to observe nonverbal aids**. To listen effectively, you must observe the speaker. Facial expressions and body motions always accompany speech and contribute a lot to messages.

Many bad listening habits develop simply because the speed of spoken messages is far slower than our ability to receive and process them. Normal speaking speeds are between 100 and 150 words a minute. The human ear can actually distinguish words in speech in excess of 500 words a minute, and many people read at speeds well beyond 500 words a minute. Finally, our minds process thoughts at thousands of words per minute.

A second reason for poor listening habits is that it takes effort to listen, as opposed to simply hearing. We need to take steps to concentrate on what we are hearing to eliminate distractions, and to take notes, and engage in active listening techniques as described in the box 'Suggestions for Effective Listening' in the next section.

2-4 GROUP COMMUNICATION

Although much of your spoken communication in business will occur in one-to-one relationships, another frequent spoken-communication activity will likely occur when you participate in groups, committees, and teams.

2-4a Increasing Focus on Groups

In recent years, developments among US businesses have shifted attention away from the employment of traditional organizational subunits as the only mechanisms for achieving organizational goals, and toward the increased use of groups.

- **Flat organizational structures**. Many businesses today have downsized and eliminated layers of management. Companies implementing Total Quality Management programs are reorganizing to distribute the decision-making power throughout the organization. The trend is to eliminate functional or departmental boundaries. Instead, work is reorganized in cross-disciplinary teams that perform broad core processes (e.g., product development and sales generation) and not narrow tasks (e.g., forecasting market demand for a particular product).

FIGURE 2.2

RapidEye/Getty Images

Although much research has been conducted in the area of group size, no optimal number of members has been identified. Groups of five to seven members are thought to be best for decision-making and problem-solving tasks. An odd number of members is often preferred because decisions are possible without tie votes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING

You can enhance the effectiveness of your face-to-face listening by following these suggestions:

▶ **Minimize environmental and mental distractions. Take time to listen.** Move to a quiet area where you are not distracted by noise or other conversation. Avoid becoming so preoccupied with what you will say next that you fail to listen.

▶ **Get in touch with the speaker. Maintain an open mind** while attempting to understand the speaker's background, prejudices, and points of view. Listen for emotionally charged words and watch for body language, gestures, facial expressions, and eye movements as clues to the speaker's underlying feelings.

▶ **Use your knowledge of speakers to your advantage.** Some people seem to run on and on with details before making the point. With this kind of speaker, you must anticipate the major point, but not pay much attention to details. Other speakers give conclusions first and perhaps omit support for them. In this case, you must ask questions to obtain further information.

▶ **Let the speaker know you are actively involved.** Show genuine interest by remaining physically and mentally involved. Provide nonverbal feedback by maintaining eye contact and smiling or nodding at statements with which you agree. Signal that you understand with such verbal messages as "I see," "go on," and "I agree."

▶ **Do not interrupt the speaker.** Try to understand the speaker's full meaning, and wait patiently for an indication of when you should enter the conversation.

▶ **Ask reflective questions that assess understanding.** Simply restate in your own words what you think the other person has said. This paraphrasing will reinforce what you have heard and allow the speaker to correct any misunderstanding or add clarification.

▶ **Use probing prompts to direct the speaker.** Use probing statements or questions to help the speaker define the issue more concretely and specifically.

▶ **Use lag time wisely.** Listening carefully should be your primary focus; however, you can think ahead at times as well. Making written or mental notes allows you to provide useful feedback when the opportunity arises. If you cannot take notes during the conversation, record important points as soon as possible so you can summarize the speaker's key points.

In a flat organizational structure, communicating across the organization chart (among cross-disciplinary teams) becomes more important than communicating up and down in a top-heavy hierarchy. An individual can take on an expanded **role** as important tasks are assumed. This role can involve power and authority that surpass the individual's **status**, or formal position in the organizational chart. Much of the communication involves face-to-face meetings with team members rather than numerous, time-consuming "handoffs" as the product moves methodically from one department to another. Companies such as IKEA, the Swedish furniture manufacturer and retailer, are using flat organizational structures within stores to build an employee attitude of job involvement and ownership.

• **Heightened focus on cooperation**. Competition has been a characteristic way of life in US companies. Organizations and individuals compete for a greater share of scarce resources, for a limited number of positions at the top of organizations, and for esteem in their professions. Such competition is a healthy sign of the human desire to succeed, and in terms of economic behavior, competition is fundamental to the private enterprise system. At the same time, when excessive competition replaces the cooperation necessary for success, communication can be diminished, if not eliminated.

Just as you want to look good in the eyes of your coworkers and supervisors, units within organizations want to look good to one another. This attitude can cause behavior to take a competitive form, or a "win/lose" philosophy. When excessive competition has a negative influence on the performance of the organization, everyone loses.

Although competition is appropriate and desirable in many situations, many companies have taken steps through open communication and information, and reward systems to reduce competition

role tasks employees assume that can involve power and authority that surpass their formal position in the organizational chart

status one's formal position in the organizational chart

and to increase cooperation. Cooperation is more likely when the competitors (individuals or groups within an organization) have an understanding of, and appreciation for, others' importance and functions. This cooperative spirit is characterized as a "win/win" philosophy. One person's success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of another. Groups identify a solution that everyone finds satisfactory and is committed to achieving. Reaching this mutual understanding requires a high degree of trust and effective interpersonal skills, particularly empathetic and intensive listening skills, and the willingness to communicate long enough to agree on an action plan acceptable to everyone (see Figure 2.3 for a discussion of interpersonal styles).

2-4b Characteristics of Effective Groups

Groups form for synergistic effects. Through pooling their efforts, members can achieve more collectively than they could individually. At the same time, the social nature of groups contributes to the individual as well. Although communication in small groups leads to decisions that are generally superior to individual decisions, the group process can motivate members, improve thinking, and assist attitude changes.

As you consider the following factors of group communication, try to visualize your relationship to the groups to which you have belonged, such as in school, religious organizations, athletics, and social activities.

- **Common goals**. In effective groups, participants share a common goal, interest, or benefit. This focus on goals allows members to overcome individual differences of opinion and to negotiate acceptable solutions.

- **Role perception**. People who are invited to join groups have perceptions of how the group should operate and what it should achieve. In addition, each member has a self-concept that dictates how he or she will behave. Those known to be aggressive will attempt to be confrontational and forceful; those who like to be known as moderates will behave in moderate ways by settling arguments rather than initiating them. In successful groups, members play a variety of necessary roles and seek to eliminate nonproductive ones.

- **Longevity**. Groups formed for short-term tasks, such as arranging a dinner and program, will spend more time on the task than on maintenance. However, groups formed for long-term assignments, such as an

FIGURE 2.3	FOUR INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STYLES

Aggressive	Verbally attacking someone else, being controlling, provoking, and maybe even physically intimidating or violent.
	Example: "What is wrong with you? All you ever think about is yourself!"
Passive-Aggressive	Retaliating in an indirect manner rather than expressing negative feelings, such as anger, directly. This type of behavior may cause confusion because the person on the receiving end may feel "stung" but can't be sure how or why.
	Example: An employee who is angry about his low salary may make negative comments on Twitter about the company rather than discuss the issue with his supervisor.
Passive	Withdrawing in an attempt to avoid confrontation. Passive people let others think for them, make decisions for them, and tell them what to do.
	Example: An employee feels a colleague is treating her poorly. She feels resentful but doesn't express it because she believes her colleague will not listen to her concerns anyway. She is likely to feel down, perhaps even depressed, and avoids interacting with her colleague.
Assertive	Knowing what you feel and what you want. This behavior involves expressing feelings and needs directly and honestly without violating the rights of others. Assertive people accept responsibility for their feelings and actions.
	Example: "I was angry when you didn't show up for our meeting. I know that your time is as valuable to you as my time is to me. I would appreciate it if in the future you would call me if you know you can't make an appointment or if you are going to be late."

accounting team auditing a major corporation, may devote much effort to maintenance goals. Maintenance includes division of duties, scheduling, record-keeping, reporting, and assessing progress.

- **Size**. The smaller the group, the more its members have the opportunity to communicate with each other. Large groups often inhibit communication because the opportunity to speak and interact is limited. However, when broad input is desired, large groups can be good, if steps are taken to ensure that there is effective communication. Interestingly, large groups generally divide into smaller groups for maintenance purposes, even when the large group is task oriented.

- **Status**. Some group members will appear to have higher ranking than others. Consider a group in which the chief executive of an organization is a member. When the chief executive speaks, members agree. When members speak, they tend to direct their remarks to the one with high status—the chief executive. People are inclined to communicate with peers as their equals, but they tend to speak upward to their supervisor and downward to lower-level employees. In general, groups require balance in status and expertise.

- **Group norms**. A **norm** is a standard or average behavior. All groups possess norms. An instructor's behavior helps establish classroom norms. If some students are allowed to arrive late for class, others will begin to arrive late. If some are allowed to talk during lectures, the norm will be for students to talk. People conform to norms because conformity is easy, and nonconformity is difficult and uncomfortable. Conformity leads to acceptance by other group members and creates communication opportunities.

- **Leadership**. The performance of groups depends on several factors, but none is more important than leadership. Some hold the mistaken view that leaders are not necessary when an organization moves to a group concept. The role of leaders changes substantially, but they still have an important part to play. The ability of a group leader to work toward task goals, while contributing to the development of group and individual goals, is often critical to group success. Leadership activities may be shared among several participants, and leadership may also be rotated, formally or informally. As part of the group, the leader can affect the establishment of norms by determining who can speak and when, encouraging contribution, and providing motivation for effective group activity.[9]

2-4c Group Roles

Groups are made up of members who play a variety of roles, both positive and negative. Negative roles detract from the group's purposes and include those in the following list.

NEGATIVE GROUP ROLES

- **Isolator**—one who is physically present but fails to participate
- **Dominator**—one who speaks too often and too long
- **Free rider**—one who does not do his or her fair share of the work
- **Detractor**—one who constantly criticizes and complains
- **Digresser**—one who deviates from the group's purpose
- **Airhead**—one who is never prepared
- **Socializer**—one who pursues only the social aspect of the group

A list of positive group roles can be found as follows:

POSITIVE GROUP ROLES

- **Facilitator** (also known as *gatekeeper*)—one who makes sure everyone gets to talk and be heard
- **Harmonizer**—one who keeps tensions low
- **Record keeper**—one who maintains records of events and activities and informs members
- **Reporter**—one who assumes responsibility for preparing materials for submission
- **Leader**—one who assumes a directive role

In healthy groups, members may fulfill multiple roles, which rotate as the need arises. Negative roles are extinguished as the group communicates openly about its goals, strategies, and expectations. The opinions and viewpoints of all members are encouraged and expected.

2-4d From Groups to Teams

Some use the terms *group* and *team* interchangeably; others distinguish between

norm a standard or average behavior

EFFECTIVE GROUP NORMS AT GOOGLE

Five years ago, Google—one of the most public proselytizers of how studying workers can transform productivity—became focused on building the perfect team. In 2012, the company embarked on an initiative—code-named Project Aristotle—to study hundreds of Google's teams and figure out why some stumbled while others soared. No matter how researchers arranged the data, though, it was almost impossible to find patterns—or any evidence that the composition of a team made any difference. As the researchers studied the groups, however, they noticed two behaviors that all the good teams generally shared. First, on the good teams, members spoke in roughly the same proportion, a phenomenon the researchers referred to as "equality in distribution of conversational turn-taking." On some teams, everyone spoke during each task; on others, leadership shifted among teammates from assignment to assignment. But in each case, by the end of the day, everyone had spoken roughly the same amount. "As long as everyone got a chance to talk, the team did well," said Anita Woolley, the study's lead author. "But if only one person or a small group spoke all the time, the collective intelligence declined."

Second, the good teams all had high "average social sensitivity"—a fancy way of saying they were skilled at intuiting how others felt based on their tone of voice, their expressions, and other nonverbal cues. One of the easiest ways to gauge social sensitivity is to show someone photos of people's eyes and ask him or her to describe what the people are thinking or feeling—an exam known as the Reading the Mind in the Eyes test. People on the more successful teams in Woolley's experiment scored above average on the Reading the Mind in the Eyes test. They seemed to know when someone was feeling upset or left out. People on the ineffective teams, in contrast, scored below average. They seemed, as a group, to have less sensitivity toward their colleagues.

Within psychology, researchers sometimes colloquially refer to traits like "conversational turn-taking" and "average social sensitivity" as aspects of what's known as psychological safety—a group culture that the Harvard Business School professor Amy Edmondson defines as a "shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking." There were other behaviors that seemed important as well—like making sure teams had clear goals and creating a culture of dependability. But Google's data indicated that psychological safety, more than anything else, was critical to making a team work.

Source: Duhig, C. (2016, Feb. 25). Credit Illustration by James Graham What Google Learned from Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved June 1, 2016 from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/magazine/what-google-learned-from-its-quest-to-build-theperfect-team.html?_r=0

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task force a team of workers that is generally given a single goal and a limited time to achieve it

quality assurance team a team that focuses on product or service quality; projects can be either short or long term

cross-functional team a team that brings together employees from various departments to solve a variety of problems

them. The major distinction between a group and a team is in members' attitudes and level of commitment. A team is typified by a clear identity and a high level of commitment on the part of members. A variety of strategies has been used for organizing workers into teams:

- A **task force** is generally given a single goal and a limited time to achieve it.

- A **quality assurance team**, or *quality circle*, focuses on product or service quality, and projects can be either short or long term.

- A **cross-functional team** brings together employees from various departments to solve a variety of problems, such as productivity issues, contract estimations and planning, and multi-department difficulties.

- A **product development team** concentrates on innovation and the development cycle of new products, and is usually cross-functional in nature.

Whereas chain of command is still at work in formal organizational relationships and responsibilities, team

structures unite people from varying portions of the organization. Work teams are typically given the authority to act on their conclusions, although the level of authority varies, depending on the organization and the purpose of the team. Typically, the group supervisor retains some responsibilities, some decisions are made completely by the team, and the rest are made jointly.

Merely placing workers into a group does not make them a functional team. A group must go through a developmental process to begin to function as a team. The four stages of team development include the following:

1. **Forming**—becoming acquainted with each other and the assigned task
2. **Storming**—dealing with conflicting personalities, goals, and ideas
3. **Norming**—developing strategies and activities that promote goal achievement
4. **Performing**—reaching the optimal performance level
5. **Adjourning**—concluding the project

For a variety of reasons, teams are often unable to advance through all four stages of development. Even long-term teams might never reach the optimal performing stage, settling instead for the acceptable performance of the norming stage. Studies indicate that virtual teams require additional attention to the planning and use of technology, as well as to members' attitudes and knowledge of such technology. See Figure 2.5 for a discussion of the stages of virtual team formation.

Research into what makes workplace teams effective indicates that training is beneficial for participants in such areas as problem solving, goal setting, conflict resolution, risk-taking, active listening, and recognizing the interests and achievements of others. Participants need to be able to satisfy one another's basic needs for belonging, personal recognition, and support. Team members at the performing stage of team development exhibit the following behaviors[10]:

- **Commitment**. They are focused on the mission, values, goals, and expectations of the team and the organization.
- **Cooperation**. They have a shared sense of purpose, mutual gain, and teamwork.
- **Communication**. They know that information must flow smoothly between top management and workers. Team members are willing to face confrontation and unpleasantness when necessary.
- **Contribution**. All members share their different backgrounds, skills, and abilities with the team.

Teams have existed for hundreds of years throughout many countries and cultures. Teams are more flexible than larger organizational groupings because they can be assembled, deployed, refocused, and disbanded more quickly, usually in ways that enhance rather than disrupt more permanent structures and processes. Organizational changes are often necessary, however, because support must be in place for performance evaluation, recognition, communication, and training systems. Strategies for bringing about needed change might include arranging site visits to similar organizations that already have teams, bringing in a successful team to speak to the organization, and bringing in consultants to discuss the team development process.

2-4e Decision Making

One of the biggest uses of groups or teams is decision making. Groups can be useful in making decisions because more people potentially bring more information to the task. In addition, groups tend to process the information they have more thoroughly through discussion. For effective decision making, groups should ensure that the process they use is a productive one. Although groups can be useful for decision making, they also face some challenges.

Groups tend to make better decisions if the pattern for doing so is explicitly identified so that the group can structure its discussion. Effective group decision making includes the following steps:

1. **Analyze the decision to be made by adequately assessing the present situation**. To analyze something is to break it down into its smaller components. Research suggests that how a group analyzes the information can dramatically affect the group's decision. Having too little evidence—or none—is one of the reasons groups sometimes

product development team usually cross-functional in nature; a group of employees who concentrate on innovation and the development cycle of new products

forming stage one of team development, in which team members become acquainted with each other and the assigned task

storming stage two of team development, in which team members deal with conflicting personalities, goals, and ideas

norming stage three of team development, in which team members develop strategies and activities that promote goal achievement

performing stage four of team development, in which team members reach the optimal performance level

adjourning now widely accepted as stage five of team development, involves the conclusion of the project and team members going their separate ways, though they may continue to keep in touch

fail to analyze the present situation accurately. Even if group members do have ample evidence, it may prove to be defective if they have not applied the proper tests to ensure the quality of the evidence. Whether the information a group has is good or bad, group members will tend to use the information if all members receive it, group members discuss it, and at least one group member champions the information. Just having information does not mean the group will use it well. Reasoning is the process of drawing conclusions from information. Flawed reasoning, like flawed data, can contribute to a bad decision.

2. **Seek input from each member**. One primary reason to work in groups and teams is the opportunity to tap the knowledge base of many people rather than just a few individuals. Research by John Oetzel documents what makes intuitive sense: Groups make better decisions when there is more equal participation in the discussion. Conversely, if several members dominate the conversation, decision quality suffers. Group members who believe they did not have an opportunity to voice their opinions and share information with others will not perceive the decision to have been reached fairly.

3. **Identify and clarify the goals of the decision**. After assessing the current situation, the group should identify its objectives. A group uncertain about its task will have difficulty making a quality decision. If its goal is clear, a group can begin to identify alternatives and then weight each as to its ability to meet that goal. A group that has not clearly spelled out what it hopes to accomplish by making a decision has no means of assessing the effectiveness of the decision.

4. **Identify multiple options**. The greater the number of alternatives a group generates, the greater the likelihood it will make a good decision. To identify good options, the group should review the information that it has gathered. Poor decision making occurs when groups pounce on the first or second option identified and fail to consider a wide range of possible options before making a decision.

5. **Review the pros and cons of the options identified**. A group must do more than identify alternatives; it should also assess the positive and negative implications of each alternative before making a decision. The pros and cons of each option should be based on the information the group has identified. A group that is so eager to make a decision that it does not take time to consider the pros and cons

of its actions is setting itself up to make a bad decision. A critical error by ineffective groups is failing to consider the consequences of their decision before they make it.

6. **Select the best alternative**. The option selected should potentially have a maximum positive outcome with minimal negative consequences. A group is more likely to select the best alternative if it has carefully assessed the situation, considered group goals, identified several choices, and noted the positive and negative implications of each. Groups sometimes have a tendency to make overly risky decisions, so it is important to critically analyze each option for possible negative implications.

A variety of methods can be used to make a final decision after the alternatives have been narrowed and weighed by the group. Knowing these methods can help the group select the best one for the situation.

- **Decision by Expert in Group:** One person in a group may seem to be the best informed about the issue, and members can turn to this person to make the choice. This expert may or may not be a group's designated leader. Deferring to an expert from within a group may be an efficient way to make a decision, but if there is not adequate discussion, the group may not be satisfied with the outcome.

- **Decision by Expert Outside Group:** A group may decide that none of its members has the credibility, knowledge, or wisdom to make a particular decision, and it may feel unable or unwilling to do so. Members can turn to someone outside the group who has authority to make a decision. Although an outside expert may make a fine decision, a group that gives up its decision-making power to one person loses the advantages of the greater input and variety of approaches that come from being a group in the first place.

- **Averaging Individual Rankings or Ratings:** Group members can be asked to rank or rate possible alternatives. After the group averages the rankings or ratings, it selects the alternative with the highest average. This method of making decisions can be a useful way to start discussions and to see where the group stands on an issue. However, it is not the best way to make a final decision, because it does not take full advantage of the give-and-take of group discussion.

- **Majority Rule:** This is the most common method of group decision making because of its speed and efficiency. But there are several drawbacks. First, it can

leave an unsatisfied minority. Second, a group that makes a decision on the basis of majority rule may sacrifice decision quality and group cohesiveness for efficiency.

- **Decision by Consensus:** Consensus occurs when all group members can support a course of action. This decision-making method is time-consuming and can be frustrating, but members are usually satisfied with the decision. If group members must also implement the solution, this method works well. To reach a decision by consensus, group members must listen and respond to individual viewpoints and manage conflicts that arise. Consensus is facilitated when group members are able to remain focused on the goal, emphasize areas of agreement, and combine or eliminate alternatives identified by the group.

Figure 2.4 provides a summary of the different decision-making methods.

Meetings are essential for communication in organizations. They present opportunities to acquire and disseminate valuable information, develop skills, and make favorable impressions on colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates. US businesses spend more money on conducting meetings than any other country in the world, and they also spend more time in meetings than people of other countries.[11] International meetings are imperative for solid business reasons but are facing greater planning scrutiny because of tightening travel budgets and a recovering global economy.

Workers frequently have negative attitudes toward meetings because they are perceived as a waste of time. Studies support this opinion, revealing that as much as one-third of the time spent in meetings is unproductive. Negative attitudes toward meetings can be changed when

FIGURE 2.4 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DECISION-MAKING METHODS

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Decision by Expert: Group defers to the member who has the most expertise or experience or to someone outside the group with authority to make decisions	• Decision is made quickly • Uses the expertise of a knowledgeable source of information	• Group members may not be satisfied with the decision • The expert could be wrong
Averaging Individual Rankings or Ratings: Group members rank or rate possible outcomes, and the alternative with the highest ranking or best rating is selected	• Uses a democratic process that taps all group members' thinking • Useful when the group needs to assess where it stands on an issue	• The average ranking or rating may be an alternative that no group member supports • Group loses the opportunity for give-and-take discussion
Majority Rule: Decision is made by the majority of group members	• Often perceived as a fair way of making decisions • Can be an efficient way of making a decision	• Those who do not support the majority opinion may feel left out of the process • Group may lose cohesiveness
Decision by Consensus: Through discussion, group members reach a decision that all members can support	• Group members are more likely to be satisfied with the outcome • Group members are more likely to participate in implementing a decision that all members support	• Takes time • Takes skill

FIGURE 2.5   STAGES OF VIRTUAL TEAM FORMATION

Forming	Members begin to develop codes of virtual conduct, to review software and hardware requirements, and to raise and answer questions about how they will use technology to accomplish the group's goals. Some groups arrange a face-to-face meeting before going online, especially when members do not know each other and the project or work is complex and requires a high degree of interaction.
Storming	Members must deal with the added complication imposed by the virtual environment. In addition to expressing opinions and debating substantive issues, the group may encounter technical problems and different levels in member expertise. For example, what should the group do if technical systems are not compatible or if some members are technically unskilled or apprehensive about using advanced technology? Virtual groups must solve technical problems if they hope to address task-related issues and move beyond this stage.
Norming	Virtual groups define members' roles, resolve conflicts, solve most technical problems, and accept the group's norms for interaction. They will be ready to focus on the task. They will also resolve issues related to differences in time, distance, technology, member cultures, and organizational environments.
Performing	Members engage in ongoing virtual interaction and encourage equal participation by all members. They have overcome or adjusted to technical roadblocks and have become comfortable with the virtual media used by the group.
Adjourning	A group may rely on virtual communication to blunt the separation anxiety that comes with the adjourning stage. If a group has matured and performed well, its members will be reluctant to give up relationships with colleagues. Even if a virtual group no longer operates in an official capacity, members may continue to use technological media to consult and interact with one another.

Source: I. N. Engleberg and D. R. Wynn. (2012). *Working in Groups: Communication Principles and Strategies*, 6th ed. Pearson.

meetings are conducted properly, giving attention to correct procedures and behavior. Successful meetings don't just happen; rather, they occur by design. Careful planning and attention to specific guidelines can help ensure the success of your meetings, whether they are conducted in a face-to-face format or electronically.

2-5a Face-to-Face Meetings

Face-to-face meetings continue to be the most used meeting format in most organizations. They offer

FIGURE 2.6   FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS CONTINUE TO BE A FREQUENTLY USED FORMAT IN MOST ORGANIZATIONS

monkeybusinessimages/Getty Images

distinct advantages and are appropriate in the following situations[12]:

- When you need the richest nonverbal cues, including body, voice, proximity, and touch
- When the issues are especially sensitive
- When the participants don't know one another
- When establishing group rapport and relationships is crucial
- When the participants can be in the same place at the same time

Face-to-face meetings can be enhanced with the use of various media tools such as flip charts, handouts, and electronic slide decks. Although face-to-face meetings provide a rich nonverbal context and direct human contact, they also have certain limitations. In addition to the obvious logistical issues of schedules and distance, face-to-face meetings may be dominated by overly vocal, quick-to-speak, and high-status members.

2-5b Electronic Meetings

Electronic meetings allow companies to reduce travel budgets, save professional time, and minimize the environmental impact caused by travel. Electronic meetings are common for those working in virtual teams. A variety of technologies is available to facilitate electronic meetings. Participants may communicate with one another through telephones, computers, or video broadcast equipment using groupware or meeting management software applications. Electronic meetings offer certain advantages. They facilitate geographically dispersed groups because they provide the choice of meeting at different places/same time, different places/different times, same place/same time, or same place/different times. Electronic meetings also speed up meeting follow-up activities because decisions and action items can be recorded electronically. Electronic meetings also have certain limitations[13]:

- They cannot replace face-to-face contact, especially when group efforts are just beginning and when groups are trying to build group values, trust, and emotional ties.
- They can make it harder to reach consensus, because more ideas are generated, and it might be harder to interpret the strength of other members' commitment to their proposals.
- The success of same-time meetings is dependent on all participants having excellent keyboarding skills to

engage in rapid-fire, in-depth discussion. This limitation might be overcome as the use of voice input systems becomes more prevalent.

2-5c Suggestions for Effective Meetings

Whether you engage in face-to-face or electronic meetings, observing the following guidelines can help ensure that your meetings are productive:

- **Identify the purpose of the meeting**. Meetings typically have various purposes: to inform, to gather information, and to make decisions. Consider whether sending an email would be a better option as a channel choice. Be wary of meetings that have become "routine." Are you meeting simply because "it's time to have a meeting" or is there a need for a meeting for decision-making or other Key purposes?

- **Limit meeting length and frequency**. Any meeting held for longer than an hour, or more frequently than once a month should be scrutinized. Ask yourself whether the meeting is necessary. Perhaps the purpose can be achieved in another way, such as email, instant messaging, or telephone.

- **Make satisfactory arrangements**. Select a date and time convenient for the majority of expected participants. For face-to-face meetings, plan the meeting site with consideration for appropriate seating for attendees, media equipment, temperature and lighting, and necessary supplies. For electronic meetings, check hardware and software and connectivity components.

- **Distribute the agenda well in advance**. The **agenda** is a meeting outline that includes important information: date, beginning and ending times, place, topics to be discussed, and responsibilities of those involved. Having the agenda prior to the meeting allows participants to know what is expected of them. A sample agenda template is provided in Model Document 2A.

- **Encourage participation**. Although it is certainly easier for one person to make decisions, the quality of decision making is often improved by involving the team. Rational decision making may begin with **brainstorming**, that is, the generation of many ideas by team members. Brainstormed ideas can then be discussed and ranked, followed by some form of voting.

agenda a meeting outline that includes important information (e.g., date, beginning and ending times, place, topics to be discussed, and responsibilities of those involved)

brainstorming the generation of many ideas by team members

MODEL 2A FORMAL GENERIC AGENDA FOR MEETINGS

Agenda for [name of group] **Meeting**
Prepared on [date agenda created]
By [*name of author of agenda*]

Attendees: [those invited to attend, often in alphabetical order]
Date and time of meeting:
Location of meeting:
Subject: [major issues to be discussed or purpose of meeting]
Agenda items:

1. Call to order
2. Routine business [procedural or administrative matters]   (10–15 minutes)
   (a) Approval of agenda for this meeting
   (b) Reading and approval of minutes of last meeting
   (c) Committee reports
3. Old business [unfinished matters from previous meeting]   (15–20 minutes)
   (a) Discussion of issue(s) carried over from previous meeting
   (b) Issue(s) arising from decision(s) made at previous meeting
4. New business   (20–25 minutes)
   (a) Most important issue
   (b) Next most important issue
   (c) Other issues in decreasing order of importance
   (d) Business from the floor not included on the agenda
       [only as time permits; otherwise, these issues should be
       addressed in the next meeting]
5. Adjournment

- **Maintain order**. An organized democratic process ensures that the will of the majority prevails; the minority is heard; and group goals are achieved as expeditiously as possible. Proper parliamentary procedure may be followed in formal meetings, as outlined in sources such as *Robert's Rules of Order* and *Jones' Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance.* For less formal meetings, the use of parliamentary procedure may not be necessary to ensure effective contribution by attendees.

consensus represents the collective opinion of the group, or the informal rule that all team members can live with at least 70% of what is agreed upon

- **Manage conflict**. In an autocratic organization, conflict might be avoided because employees are conditioned to be submissive. Such an environment, however, leads to smoldering resentment. On the other hand, conflict is a normal part of any team effort and can lead to creative discussion and superior outcomes. Maintaining focus on issues and not personalities helps ensure that conflict is productive rather than destructive.

- **Seek consensus**. Although unanimous agreement on decisions is an optimal outcome, total agreement cannot always be achieved. **Consensus** represents the collective opinion of the group, or the informal rule that all team members can live with at least 70% of what is agreed upon.

- **Prepare thorough minutes**. Minutes provide a concise record of meeting actions, ensure the tracking and

follow-up of issues from previous meetings, and assist in the implementation of previously reached decisions.

In addition to these general rules for meetings, preparing for and holding virtual meetings include some extra considerations. First, it is important that participants are knowledgeable about the use of the meeting technology, therefore, training may be required. At the beginning of the meeting, individuals should introduce themselves, particularly if a meeting tool is being used that does not provide visual access to attendees. For clarity, questions and comments should be directed to specific individuals. It is also important that noise is reduced to ensure clear reception, so smartphones and pagers should be turned off, and side conversations should be avoided. For video-conferences, participants need to be aware of their nonverbal behaviors to avoid distracting or disconcerting practices, such as tapping a pen or reviewing text messages. Because you are on camera, it is important to maintain eye contact by looking at the camera.

Meetings are an important management tool and are useful for idea exchange. They also provide opportunities for you, as a meeting participant, to enhance your credibility and communicate impressions of power, competence, and status. Knowing how to present yourself, and your ideas, and exhibiting knowledge about correct meeting management will assist you in your career advancement.

STUDY TOOLS 2

LOCATED AT THE BACK OF THE TEXTBOOK
☐ Tear-Out Chapter Review Card
☐ Grammar, Usage, and Style Appendices

ACCESSIBLE IN MINDTAP
☐ Review Key Term flashcards and create your own
☐ Complete the Aplia Chapter Assignment
☐ Test Your Knowledge with Practice Quizzes
☐ View chapter model documents
☐ Access supplemental grammar resources

3 | Planning and Decision Making

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
After studying this chapter, you will be able to ...

3-1 Consider the contextual forces that may affect whether, how, to whom, and when a message is sent.

3-2 Identify the purpose of the message and the appropriate channel and medium.

3-3 Develop clear perceptions of the audience to enhance the impact and persuasiveness of the message, improve goodwill, and establish and maintain the credibility of the communicator.

3-4 Apply tactics for adapting messages to the audience, including those for communicating ethically and responsibly.

3-5 Recognize the importance of organization when planning the first draft.

In a report titled "Writing: A Ticket to Work . . . or a Ticket Out," the National Commission on Writing reported that two-thirds of salaried employees in large companies have some writing responsibilities, and getting hired and promoted in many industries requires strong writing abilities. Although writing is important in most managerial-level jobs, the Commission also concluded that one-third of employees in corporate America write poorly. Knowing that effective communication is tied to the corporate bottom line, and that many employees can't write well, businesses are investing $3.1 billion annually to train employees to write.[1] Remedies are needed to prevent confusion, waste, errors, lost productivity, and a damaged corporate image, which are all caused by employees, customers, and clients muddling their way through unreadable messages.

As a capable communicator, you can immediately add value to your organization and positively set yourself apart from your peers, who are struggling to articulate ideas in writing and in presentations. Communication that commands attention and can be understood easily is essential for survival during the information explosion that we are experiencing today. On the job, you will be expected to process volumes of available information and shape useful messages that respond to the needs of customers or clients, coworkers and supervisors, and other key business partners. Additionally, increased use of electronic communication (email, texts, instant messages, blogs, wikis, videoconferences, etc.) will require you to be technologically savvy and capable of adapting the rules of good communication to the demands of emerging technology.

How can you learn to plan and prepare powerful business messages? The process of systematic analysis, outlined in Figure 3.1, will help you develop messages that save you and your organization valuable time and resources, and portray you as a capable, energetic professional. A thorough analysis of the audience and your specific communication assignment will empower you to create a first draft efficiently, and to revise and proofread your message for accuracy, conciseness, and appropriate tone.

mediaphotos/iStock/Getty Images

3-1 STEP 1: CONSIDER THE APPLICABLE CONTEXTUAL FORCES

Chapter 1 discussed four contextual forces that may affect whether, how, to whom, and when a message is sent. These were legal and ethical constraints, diversity challenges, changing technology, and team environment. In addition to these four forces, communication patterns within an organization are a contextual force that should also be considered when planning a message. The organizational culture as well as the four dimensions of context may influence how, whether, to whom, and when a message is sent. These two issues are discussed in the sections that follow.

3-1a Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be variously defined depending on the theoretical assumptions of the definer. One perspective of culture is that it is "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration and which has worked well enough to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems."[2] This view assumes that culture exists outside of the participants and their communication patterns. Another perspective of organizational culture is that it is created and reproduced through the communication practices of its participants, with an expansive view of what constitutes communication: symbols; artifacts, such as company logos and accepted employee dress; and structural elements, such as office layout and design. Regardless of the perspective applied to defining the phenomenon, an organization's culture determines what it can and cannot do, and to the extent of individual members' socialization into that culture, it determines what they can and cannot do as well. This is true of actions, behaviors, communicative practices, and the use and inclusion of accepted artifacts.

organizational culture a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group has learned as it solved its problems with external adaptation and internal integration, and which has worked well enough to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP* 6
Consider the applicable contextual forces	Determine the purpose and select an appropriate channel and medium	Envision the audience	Adapt the message to the audience's needs and concerns	Organize the message	Prepare the first draft

*You will focus on the planning process (Steps 1–5) in this chapter; you will learn to prepare the message in Chapter 4 (Step 6).

In other words, organizational culture affects the type, amount, and quality of communication that is generally accepted within an organization (and vice versa in the latter definition of corporate culture). The culture of a business provides part of the *context* for interpreting the meaning of everyday organizational life, as well as determining what are considered appropriate messages, the proper or expected ways to convey them, and to whom.

For example, Mindvalley, a progressive personal development company based in Malaysia, has declared "Love Week" to honor the values of Valentine's Day. During this annual one-week event in February, each employee is assigned a Secret Angel who anonymously performs acts of caring and kindness for him or her. Studies show that employees are more engaged and productive when they are happy and when their interactions with colleagues are positive. The event has been so powerful that Mindvalley is globally encouraging and inspiring other companies to try it as well.[3]

Compare these values with the type of culture that you might find in an investment banking firm in which competition, individualism, and the drive for profits and bonuses would likely be key elements, and it should be easy to see how culture might affect how communication occurs and what is expected and accepted within an organization in terms of behaviors.

Theorists have constructed a variety of models to try to capture the essence of corporate culture, a discussion of which goes beyond the scope of this text. But one simple model, based on the Competing Values Framework, distinguishes four culture types, which are summarized here to illustrate the differences that might emerge in corporate cultures:

- **Clan culture (internal focus and flexible)**—A friendly workplace where leaders act like father figures.

- **Adhocracy culture (external focus and flexible)**—A dynamic workplace with leaders who stimulate innovation.

- **Market culture (external focus and controlled)**—A competitive workplace where leaders are hard drivers.

- **Hierarchy culture (internal focus and controlled)**—A structured and formalized workplace where leaders act like coordinators or administrators.

Generally speaking, the culture of business can be characterized as typically having a bias toward action, a demand for confidence, and a results orientation. The culture of business can be seen in everyday office interactions. Being knowledgeable about an organization's culture can help you gauge the type and quality of communication that takes place, as well as whether you are a good match with the organization. For example, does the organization have an open door policy, or are you expected to obey the hierarchical order of management when communicating concerns? Does the office have an open floor plan, or do employees have private offices? Do people wear T-shirts and shorts or suits to work every day? The first situation in each of these cases probably signals that the culture is less formal in terms of its expectations and communication patterns, whereas the second situation may indicate a culture that is more formal in terms of its expectations regarding punctuality and communication choices and behaviors.

3-1b Dimensions of Context

In addition to the other elements of context discussed in previous chapters and sections, there are several dimensions to context, including the physical, social, chronological, and cultural. The *physical* context or setting can influence the content and quality of interaction. For example, if you were to ask your boss for a raise, the effect of the setting might dramatically affect your chances for success. How might the following settings affect the success of such an interaction, how it might take place, or whether it should take place: In the boss's office? At a company picnic? Over lunch at a restaurant? In your work area with others observing?