

Twelfth Edition

# Business and Administrative Communication

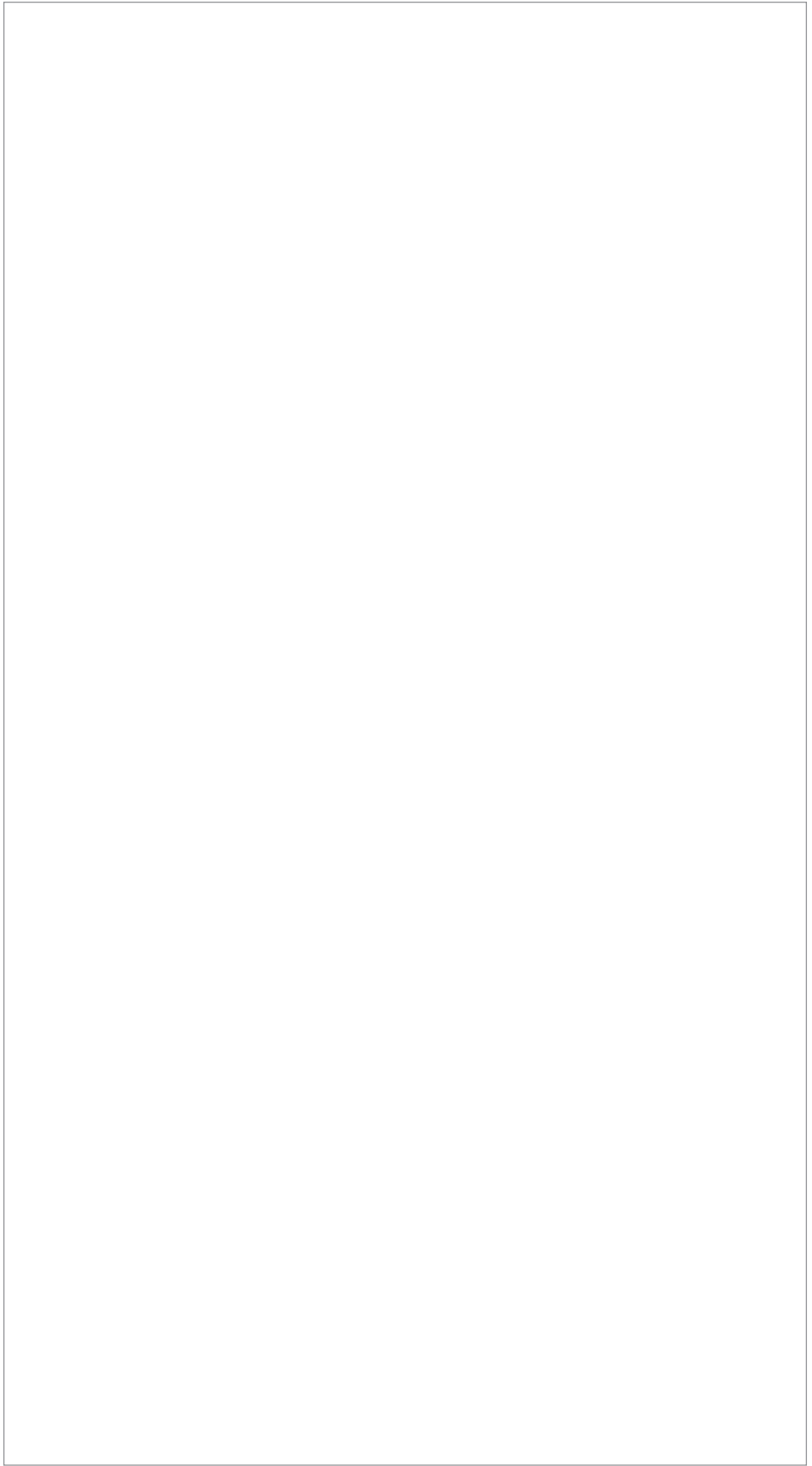
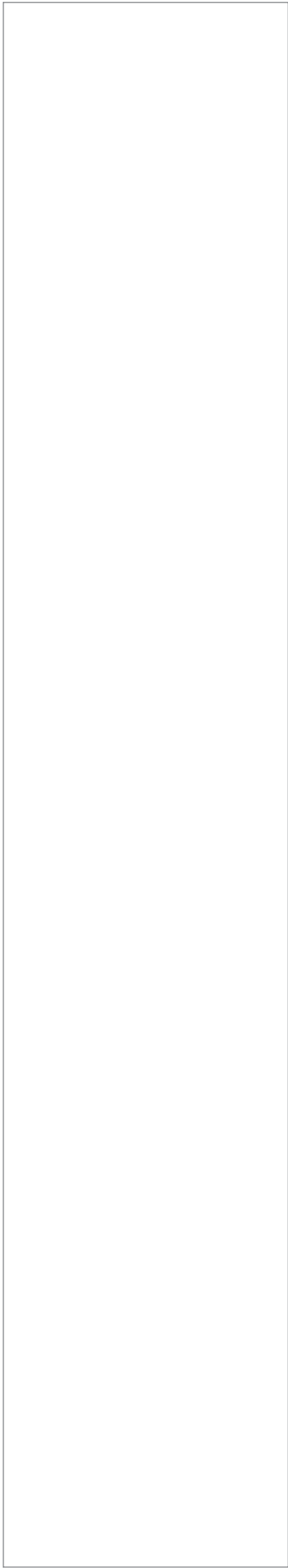
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# Business and Administrative Communication





Twelfth Edition

# Business and Administrative Communication

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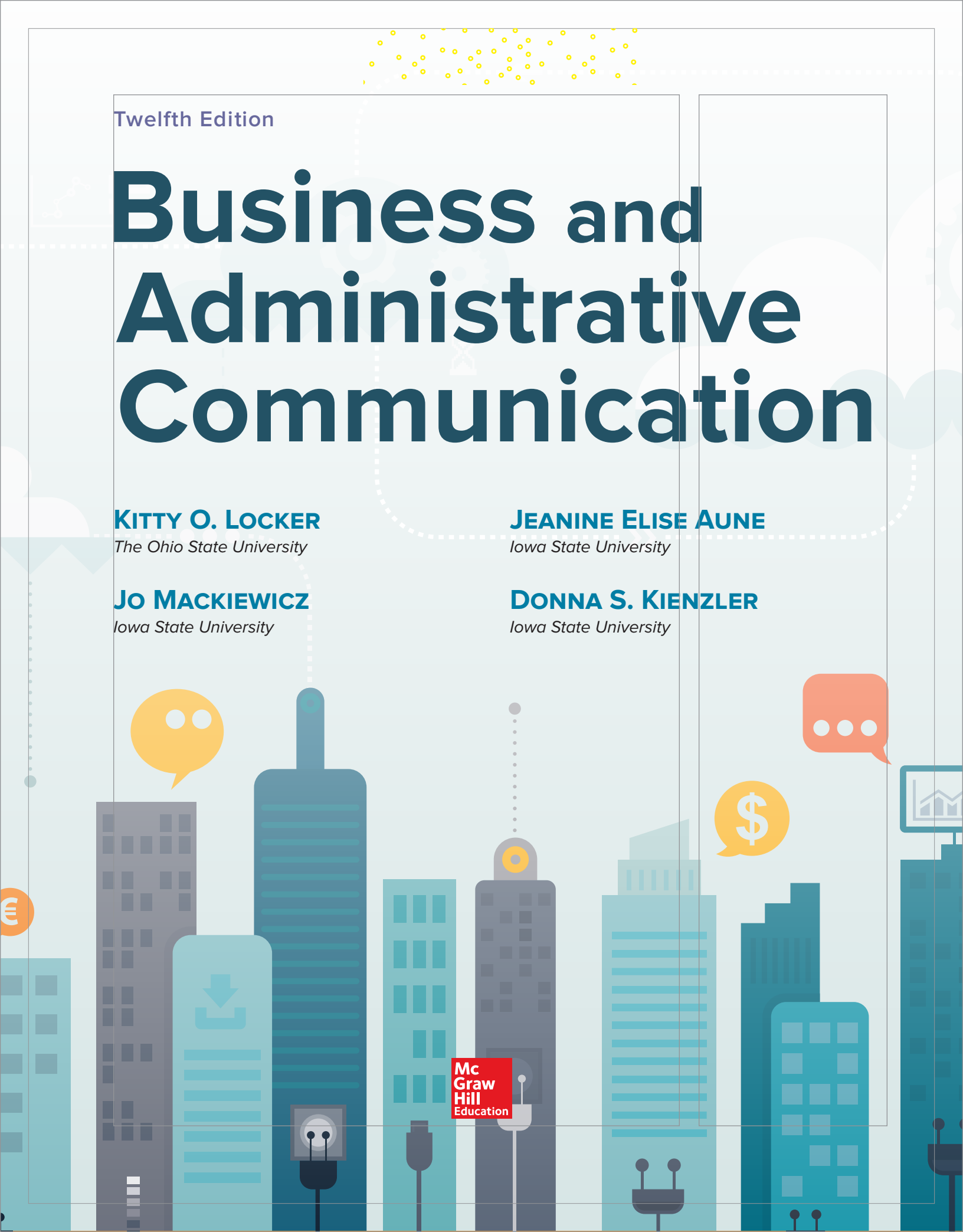
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## BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATION, TWELFTH EDITION

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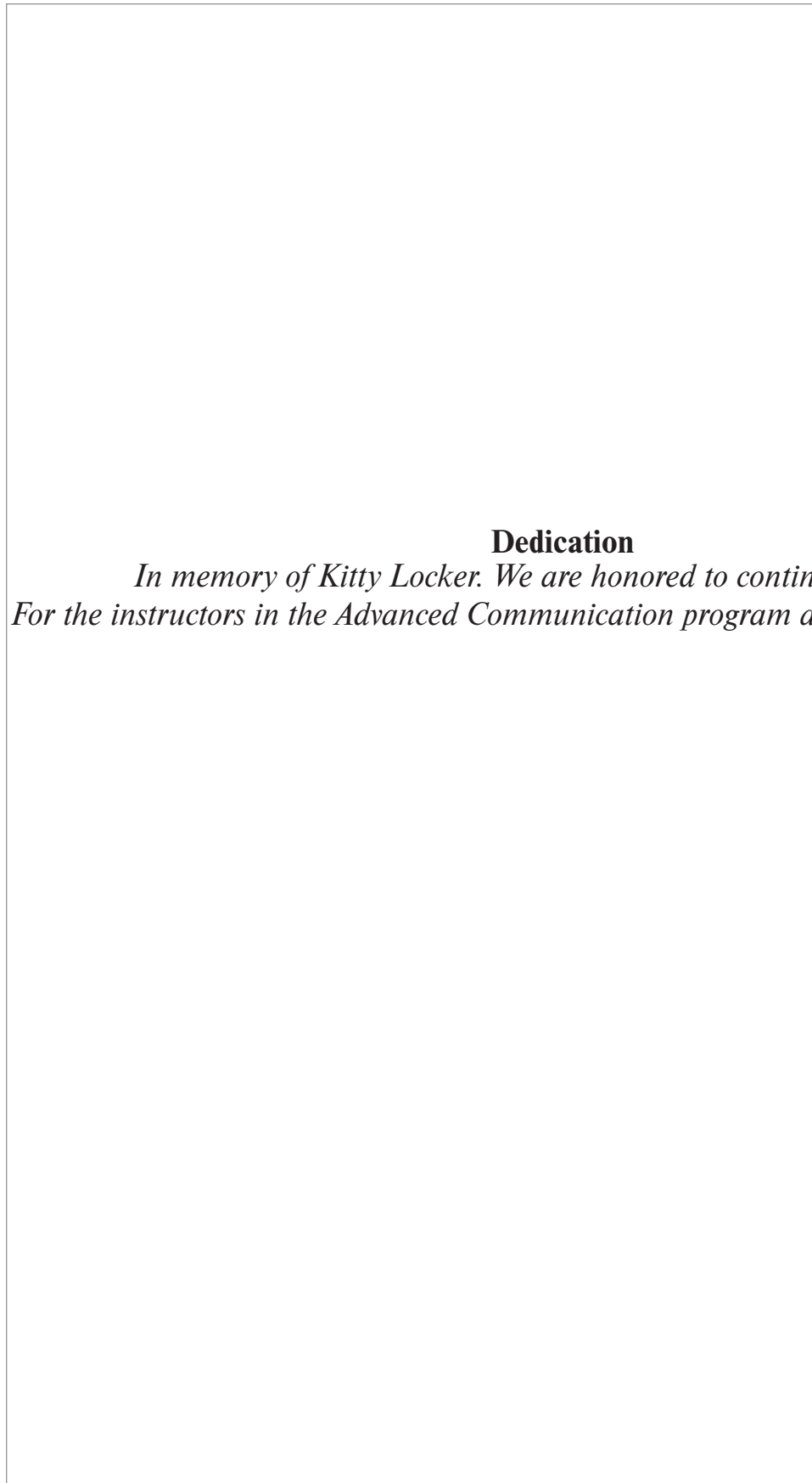
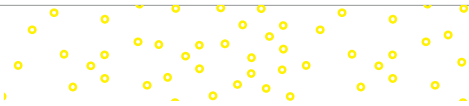
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### **Dedication**

*In memory of Kitty Locker. We are honored to continue her legacy.  
For the instructors in the Advanced Communication program at Iowa State University.*





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## Business and Administrative Communication

*Business and Administrative Communication (BAC)* by Kitty Locker has long delivered a high standard of business communication pedagogy and resources. While staying true to its tradition, the 12th edition modernizes the chapter content and organization to make it more elegant and more relevant to students today. The result is students who are more engaged with the material and thus better prepared for the fast-paced, ever more digital business world. The foundation of this text is its rhetorical/situational approach to business communication, underscoring in each chapter the importance of analyzing each communicative situation in terms of audience, purpose, and context. This approach gives students the ability to choose the most applicable genre and to generate an effective business message no matter the situation. Because pedagogically strong exercises and instructor resources are vitally important to using a text effectively, the 12th edition includes new and updated exercises and instructor resources.

### What's New?

As the new coauthors, we are excited to have our names follow those of Kitty Locker and Donna Kienzler on this 12th edition of *BAC*. We think you'll see that we have worked hard to update the content and flow, while staying true to the tradition of this text.

You'll find substantial changes from the 11th edition to this 12th edition. We have reorganized content, for example, grouping coverage of reports into one chapter. In the process of reorganizing, we greatly streamlined the text to eliminate redundancies and content not directly relevant to business communication. We think these two changes will help students learn the content more efficiently. Likewise, we substantially redesigned the textbook, paring down the visual design for a cleaner look and a more comfortable reading experience. For example, we eliminated all of the sidebar content and most of the icons. And, like past editors of *BAC*, we updated the cases, examples, and references so that the text remains relevant to its readers—both students and instructors. The following list delineates just **a few** of the specific changes that we made.

#### CHAPTER 1

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case focused on communication trouble at Netflix.
- Incorporated some content from the 11th edition's Chapter 4, such as a section on ethics.

#### CHAPTER 2

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case focused on Wendy's successful use of Twitter to promote its brand.
- Added questions for analysis under "Analyzing Your Audience."
- Updated information on choosing appropriate channels to reach an audience.

#### CHAPTER 3

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case focused on Amazon's successful use of Amazon Prime to generate goodwill with its customers.
- Added a section on considering cultural differences with international audiences.

## CHAPTER 4

- Moved some content from the 11th edition's Chapter 4 to the 12th edition's Chapters 1, 6, and 7.
- Updated the Beef Products Inc. "pink slime" case.

## CHAPTER 5

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case focused on the embarrassment generated by poor document design at the 2017 Academy Awards.
- Added numerous, current examples throughout the chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case focused on the way that McDonald's used cultural analysis and global agility to reinvent and rebrand McCafé as "The Corner."
- Added an opening section on avoiding bias and stereotypes.
- Added sections on cultural awareness, intercultural competence, and global English.
- Revised and updated content throughout the chapter, including coverage of non-verbal communication, body language, personal space, and time.

## CHAPTER 7

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case about the way that Satya Nadella created a team-focused corporate culture at Microsoft.
- Added a new section on establishing ground rules for working in teams.
- Revised and updated sections on conflict resolution, effective meetings, and using technology in teams.

## CHAPTER 8

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case on how individuals and organizations used social media to help inform people before and to raise money after Hurricane Harvey.
- Added new content about best practices for using email, text messages, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- Added new content on building goodwill using technology.
- Added a section on reasons to use technology to share messages.

## CHAPTER 9

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case focused on an unsuccessful public apology from United Airline's CEO, David Munoz.
- Expanded the section on apologies.
- Added a section on ethical issues and negative messages.

## CHAPTER 10

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case about Wikipedia's successful persuasive fund-raising messages.
- Used current research to update the chapter's examples.

## CHAPTER 11

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case about the consequences of lying on job-application materials.
- Merged content from the 11th edition's Chapters 12 and 13.

## CHAPTER 12

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case exemplifying a trend in interviewing: asking questions geared toward getting interviewees to “think on their feet.”
- Used current research to update the chapter's examples (from the 11th edition's Chapter 14).

## CHAPTER 13

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case about a graph that upended the reputation of glyphosate as a relatively safe herbicide.
- Added new content on best practices for creating maps and infographics.
- Used current research to update examples.
- Edited chapter exercises to reduce redundancy and to increase relevance and currency.
- Added numerous new examples in figures.

## CHAPTER 14

- Merged relevant sections from the 11th edition's Chapters 15 and 17 to focus the chapter on proposals.
- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case about the National Science Foundation's call for papers after Hurricane Harvey. Applicants were competing for limited resources.
- Updated the section on proposal style.
- Added section on grant proposals.

## CHAPTER 15

- Merged relevant sections from the 11th edition's Chapters 15, 17, and 18 to focus the chapter on reports.
- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case about a collaborative report on STEM education, coauthored by the U.S. Department of Education and the American Institutes for Research.
- Used current research to update the chapter.
- Synthesized and updated end-of-chapter exercises.

## CHAPTER 16

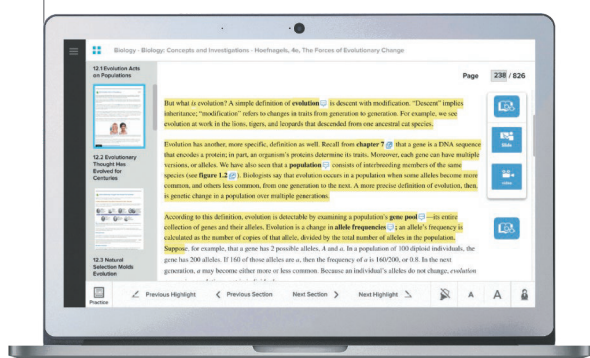
- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case about how an AI robot “earned” citizenship.
- Added new content on general versus specific purpose, the components of an introduction and a conclusion, and the “recency effect.”
- Added numerous new images to illustrate the chapter's points.

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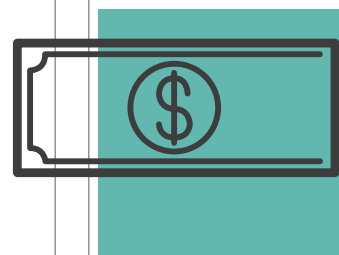
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- Jordan Cunningham,  
Eastern Washington University

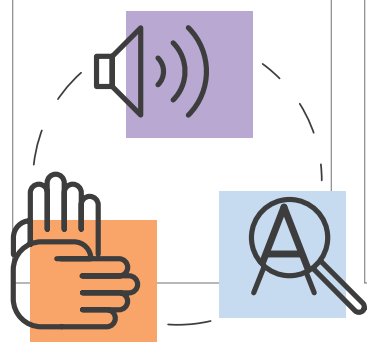
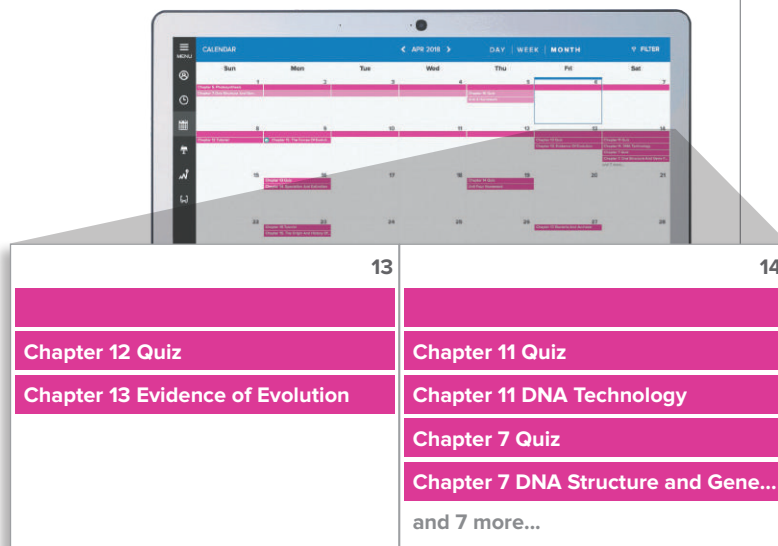
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We are honored to carry on the tradition that Kitty Locker began and that Donna Kienzler fostered.

*To Mackiewicz*

*Janine Cune*



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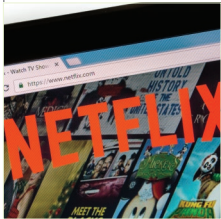
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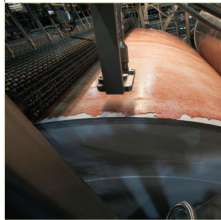
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# Business and Administrative Communication



# Succeeding in Business Communication

## Chapter Outline

## Benefits of Good Communication Skills

## "I'll Never Have to Write Because . . ."

## Communicating on the Job

## The Cost of Communication

## Costs of Poor Communication

- Wasted Time
- Wasted Efforts
- Lost Goodwill
- Legal Problems

## Basic Criteria for Effective Messages

## Following Conventions

## Understanding and Analyzing Business Communication Situations

## Ethics

## Corporate Culture

## How to Solve Business Communication Problems

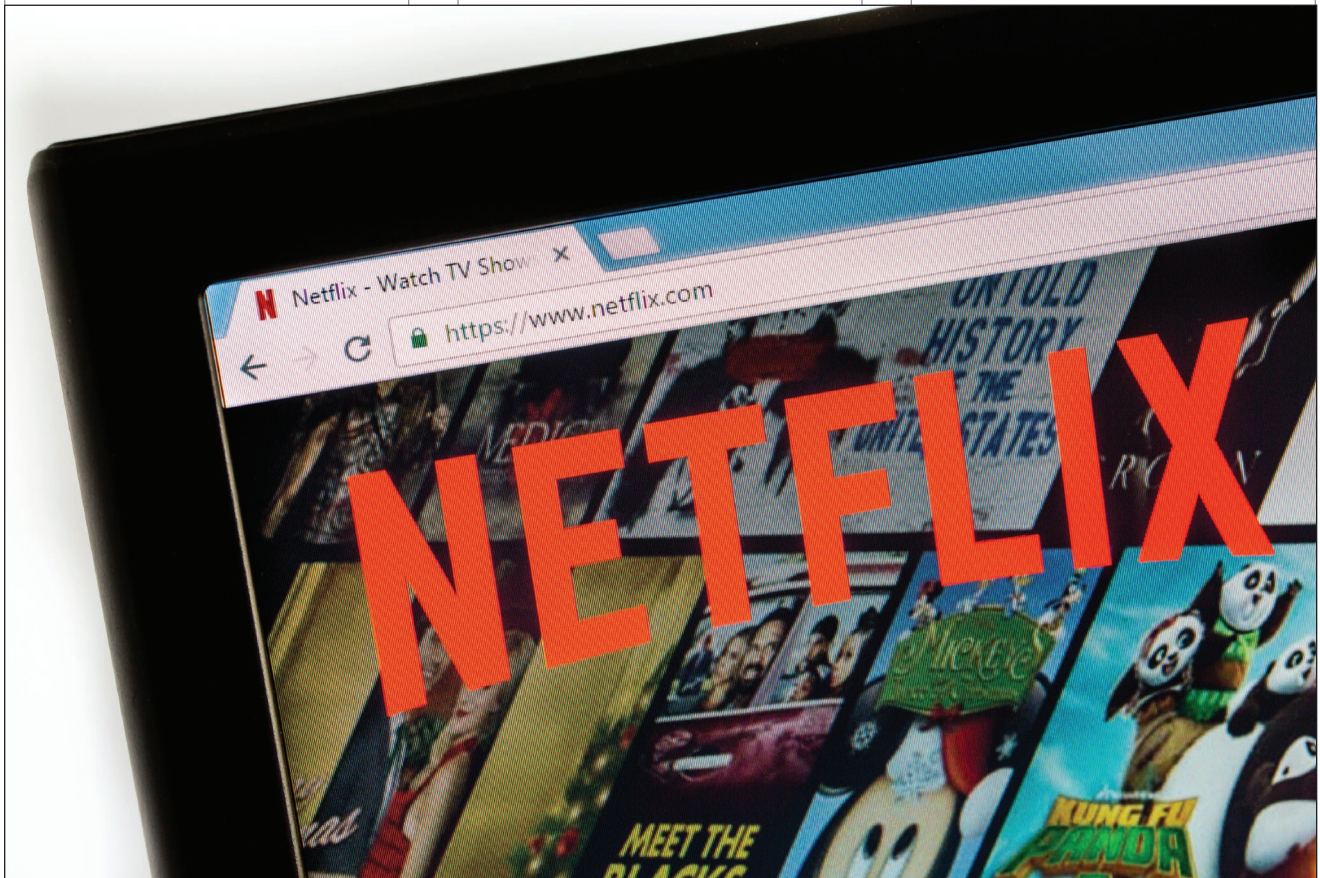
- Gather Knowledge and Brainstorm Solutions.
- Answer the Five Questions for Analysis.
- Organize Your Information to Fit Your Audiences, Your Purposes, and the Situation.
- Make Your Document Visually Inviting.
- Revise Your Draft to Create a Friendly, Businesslike, Positive Style.
- Edit Your Draft for Standard English; Double-Check Names and Numbers.
- Use the Response You Get to Plan Future Messages.

### Summary by Learning Objectives



# NEWSWORTHY COMMUNICATION

## Costly Miscommunications: Trouble at Netflix



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Poorly done business communications can have severe consequences. Netflix learned this lesson the hard way when it chose to split its DVD and streaming services. The poorly communicated plan led Netflix to suffer in the following ways:

- The loss of approximately 800,000 subscriptions.
- The loss of 77% of its stock value in four months.

- Internal restructuring that led to a never-materialized spin-off company, Qwikster.

- A significant loss of reputation and customer goodwill.

A large part of the issue was the means of delivery of the message. A poorly worded blog post failed to minimize the negatives of the message. Indeed, the blog post invited members to cancel their subscriptions in its closing line.

Further, the comments section of the blog post was filled with unhappy customer comments about the plan. As a result, the chief executive officer (CEO) wrote an apologetic blog post as well as co-authored a shareholder statement that reassured investors while revising projected domestic-customer subscriptions down by 1,000,000.

Sources: Nick Wingfield and Brian Stelter, "How Netflix Lost 800,000 Members, and Good Will," *The New York Times*, October 24, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/technology/netflix-lost-800000-members-with-price-rise-and-split-plan.html?mcubz=1>.

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## Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know

- LO 1-1** What the benefits of good communication are.
- LO 1-2** Why you need to be able to communicate well.
- LO 1-3** What the costs of communication are.
- LO 1-4** What the costs of poor communication are.
- LO 1-5** What the basic criteria for effective messages are.
- LO 1-6** What role conventions play in business communication.
- LO 1-7** Why ethics are so important in business communication.
- LO 1-8** How corporate culture affects the business environment.
- LO 1-9** How to solve business communication problems.

Communication is a vital part of business. As you will see in this and later chapters, missteps in handling business communications can cost organizations millions, and even billions, of dollars.

The amount of business communication is staggering. The U.S. Postal Service processed 160 billion pieces of mail in 2012, more than half of which were business communications. Advertising mail accounted for 79.5 billion pieces; first-class mail accounted for 68.7 billion,<sup>1</sup> many of which were business communications such as bills and insurance documents. When you consider that most of your business communications are electronic or oral, you can start to imagine the staggering number of business communications that people compose, hear, and read.

More and more, communications—both professional and personal—are moving to electronic media.

- According to the *Harvard Business Review*, “In the past decade the world has gone from a total of 12 billion emails a day to 247 billion.”<sup>2</sup>
- In June 2014, people around the world sent 561 billion text messages.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2017, Twitter passed 330 million monthly users.<sup>4</sup>

Business depends on communication. People must communicate to plan products and services; hire, train, and motivate workers; coordinate manufacturing and delivery; persuade customers to buy; and bill them for the sale. Indeed, for many businesses and nonprofit and government organizations, the “product” is information or services rather than something tangible. Information and services are created and delivered by communication. In every organization, communication is the way people get work done.

Communication takes many forms: face-to-face or phone conversations, informal meetings, presentations, email messages, letters, memos, reports, blogs, tweets, text messaging, social media, and websites. All of these methods are forms of **verbal communication**, or communication that uses words. **Nonverbal communication** does not use words. Pictures, computer graphics, and company logos are nonverbal. Interpersonal nonverbal signals include how people sit at meetings, how office spaces are used, and how long someone keeps a visitor waiting.

## Benefits of Good Communication Skills

**LO 1-1**

Good communication is worth every minute it takes and every penny it costs. Recently, the communication practices of 335 U.S. and Canadian companies with an average of 13,000 employees each and median annual revenues of \$1.8 billion were analyzed. The study found those companies that best communicated with their employees enjoyed “greater employee engagement and commitment, higher retention and productivity, and—ultimately—better financial performance . . .

- They boasted a 19.4% higher market premium (the degree to which the company’s market value exceeds the cost of its assets).
- They were 4.5 times more likely to report high levels of employee engagement.
- They were 20% more likely to report lower turnover rates.”<sup>5</sup>

Good communication skills also will benefit you. You may have wonderful ideas for your workplace, but unless you can communicate them to the relevant people, they will get you nowhere. In fact, many experts call communication skills—the ability to persuade, explain complex material, and adapt information to particular audiences—one of the most crucial skills of the new workplace, and a skill that is unlikely to be replaced by a computer.

Even in your first job, you’ll communicate. You’ll listen to instructions; you’ll ask questions; you may solve problems with other workers in teams. Even entry-level jobs require high-level skills in reasoning, mathematics, and communicating. As a result, communication ability consistently ranks first among the qualities that employers look for in college graduates.<sup>6</sup> Warren Buffett, chairman of Berkshire Hathaway and ranked among the world’s wealthiest people, told Columbia Business School students that they could increase their value 50% by learning communication skills, and that many of them did not yet have those skills.<sup>7</sup>

The National Commission on Writing surveyed 120 major corporations, employing nearly 8 million workers. Almost 70% of respondents said that at least two-thirds of their employees have specific writing responsibilities included in their position descriptions. These writing responsibilities include

- Email (100% of employees).
- Presentations with visuals, such as PowerPoint slides (100%).
- Memos and correspondence (70%).
- Formal reports (62%).
- Technical reports (59%).

Respondents also noted that communication functions were least likely to be outsourced.<sup>8</sup>

Because communication skills are so important, good communicators earn more. Research has shown that among people with two- or four-year degrees, workers in the top 20% of writing ability earn, on average, more than three times as much as workers whose writing falls into the worst 20%.<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey Gitomer, business consultant and author of best-selling business books, says there are three secrets to getting known in the business world; all of them are communication skills: writing, e-zining (he reaches more than 130,000 subscribers each week), and speaking. He states, “Writing leads to wealth.”<sup>10</sup>

## “I’ll Never Have to Write Because . . .”

### LO 1-2

Despite the frequency of on-the-job writing and the importance of overall communication skills, college graduates often don’t demonstrate the necessary writing skills as they enter the workforce. A survey of employers conducted on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities found that writing was one of the weakest skills of college graduates.<sup>11</sup> In another large survey, respondents noted that a lack of “effective business communication skills appears to be a major stumbling block among new [job] entrants—even at the college level.”<sup>12</sup>

Some students think that an administrative assistant will do their writing, that they can use form letters if they do have to write, that only technical skills matter, or that they’ll call or text rather than write. Each of these claims is fundamentally flawed.

Claim 1: An administrative assistant will do all my writing.

Reality: Because of automation and restructuring, job responsibilities in offices have changed. Today, many offices do not have typing pools. Most secretaries have become administrative assistants with their own complex tasks such as training, research, and database management for several managers. Managers are likely to take care of their own writing, data entry, and phone calls.

Claim 2: I’ll use form letters or templates when I need to write.

Reality: A form letter is designed to cover only routine situations, many of which are computerized or outsourced. Also, the higher you rise, the more frequently you’ll face situations that aren’t routine, that demand creative solutions.

Claim 3: I’m being hired as an accountant, not a writer.

Reality: Almost every entry-level professional or managerial job requires you to write email messages, speak to small groups, write documents, and present your work for annual reviews. People who do these things well are likely to be promoted beyond the entry level. Employees in jobs as diverse as firefighters, security professionals, and construction project managers all are being told to polish their writing and speaking skills.<sup>13</sup>

Claim 4: I’ll just pick up the phone.

Reality: Important phone calls require follow-up letters or emails. People in organizations put things in writing to make themselves visible, to create a record, to convey complex data, to make things convenient for the reader, to save money, and to convey their own messages more effectively. “If it isn’t in writing, it didn’t happen” is a maxim at many companies. Writing is an essential way to record agreements, to make yourself visible, and to let your accomplishments be known.

## Communicating on the Job

Communication—oral, nonverbal, and written—goes to both internal and external audiences. **Internal audiences** are other people in the same organization: subordinates, superiors, and peers. **External audiences** are people outside the organization: customers, suppliers, distributors, unions, stockholders, potential employees, trade associations, special interest groups, government agencies, the press, and the general public.

People in organizations produce a large variety of documents. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 list a few of the specific documents produced at Ryerson, a company that fabricates and sells steel, aluminum, other metals, and plastics to a wide variety of industrial clients and has sales offices across the United States, Canada, and China.

All of the documents in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 have one or more of the three basic purposes of organizational writing: to inform, to request or persuade, and to build

**Figure 1.1** Internal Documents Produced in One Organization

Document	Description of document	Purpose(s) of document
Transmittal	Memo accompanying document, telling why it's being forwarded to the receiver	Inform; persuade reader to read document; build image and goodwill
Monthly or quarterly report	Report summarizing profitability, productivity, and problems during period; used to plan activity for next month or quarter	Inform; build image and goodwill (report is accurate, complete; writer understands company)
Policy and procedure bulletin	Statement of company policies and instructions (e.g., how to enter orders, how to run fire drills)	Inform; build image and goodwill (procedures are reasonable)
Request to deviate from policy and procedure bulletin	Persuasive message arguing that another approach is better for a specific situation than the standard approach	Persuade; build image and goodwill (request is reasonable; writer seeks good of company)
Performance appraisal	Evaluation of an employee's performance	Inform; persuade employee to improve
Memo of congratulations	Congratulations to employees who have won awards, been promoted	Build goodwill

**Figure 1.2** External Documents Produced in One Organization

Document	Description of document	Purpose(s) of document
Quotation	Letter giving price for a specific product or service	Inform; build goodwill (price is reasonable)
Claims adjustment	Letter granting or denying customer request to be given credit for defective goods or service	Inform; build goodwill
Job description	Description of qualifications and duties of job; used for performance appraisals, salaries, and hiring	Inform; persuade good candidates to apply; build goodwill (job duties match level, pay)
10-K report	Report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission detailing financial information	Inform
Annual report	Report to stockholders summarizing financial information for year	Inform; persuade stockholders to retain stock and others to buy; build goodwill (company is a good corporate citizen)
Thank-you letter	Letter to suppliers, customers, or other people who have helped individuals or the company	Build goodwill

goodwill. In fact, most messages have multiple purposes. When you answer a question, for instance, you're informing, but you also want to build goodwill by suggesting that you're competent and perceptive and that your answer is correct and complete.

## The Cost of Communication

Writing costs money. The annual Social Security statements cost \$70 million a year to mail, even with huge economies of scale.<sup>14</sup> The cost does not include employee time in the writing and processing, a major expense.

**LO 1-3**



Business communication involves paper documents, electronic communications, and interpersonal abilities.

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Document cycling processes also increase costs. In many organizations, all external documents must be approved before they go out. *ISO 9000 Quality Systems Handbook* requires approval procedures of both internal and external documents.<sup>15</sup> A major document may *cycle* from writer to superior to writer to another superior to writer again 10 or more times before final approval. Longer documents can involve large teams of people and take months to write.

Large organizations handle so much paper that even small changes to their communication practices amount to millions of dollars. Xerox Global Services Europe touts contractual annual savings of up to 1 million euros for organizations with 4,000 or more employees who switch to its printing services.<sup>16</sup> The Federal Electronics Challenge developed a list of formatting guidelines to reduce paper waste and increase savings.<sup>17</sup>

Another significant cost of communication is email storage. In addition to their exponential increase in frequency, emails also are growing in size. Many more of them also come with attachments. And businesses are storing much of this huge load on their servers. But the cost of the hardware is only some of the storage cost; a larger cost is administering and maintaining the archives. These costs include downtime when storage systems crash and time spent retrieving lost or corrupted messages.<sup>18</sup>

## Costs of Poor Communication

### LO 1-4

Poor communication can cost billions of dollars.

- Hurricane Katrina caused billions of dollars of damage—damage that was worsened by horrendous miscommunications between federal, state, and private relief organizations. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) claimed it was days before the relief agency knew about the thousands of people stranded in the New Orleans Convention Center. The lack of coordination and communication caused by these systems put even more lives at risk by delaying assistance where it was most needed. Some rescuers in helicopters were unable to communicate with rescuers in boats. Some National Guard units actually used runners to communicate. State and local agency teams received conflicting messages, which led to confusion.<sup>19</sup> The massive communication problems led to an entire chapter on communication in the U.S. House of Representatives report on the Hurricane Katrina disaster.
- Internal and external communication problems contributed greatly to delays in Boeing's 787 Dreamliner, delays that cost Boeing billions in penalties and caused some customers to switch their orders to Airbus.<sup>20</sup>
- GlaxoSmithKline was fined \$3 billion, the largest payment ever by a drug company, for failing to communicate accurately safety data on some of its popular drugs and for misdirecting the use of others.<sup>21</sup>
- British Petroleum agreed to a \$4 billion fine for its role in the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. That sum is in addition to the \$36.5 billion BP already had spent, or committed to spend, in additional fines, cleanup costs, and settlements to individuals and businesses. According to the presidential commission, inadequate communication among British Petroleum, Halliburton, and Transocean, as well as within their own companies, was a contributing factor in BP's massive oil spill, which caused extensive damage, as well as fatalities, in the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>22</sup>

Costs of poor communication are not just financial. People died in the explosion of British Petroleum's oil well. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, inaccurate media reports of looting convinced some residents to stay to protect their property instead of evacuating; false reports of shootings at helicopters resulted in some states refusing to send trained emergency workers.

Not all communication costs are so dramatic, however. When communication isn't as good as it could be, you and your organization pay a price in wasted time, wasted effort, lost goodwill, and legal problems.

## Wasted Time

Bad writing takes longer to read as we struggle to understand what we're reading. How quickly we can comprehend written material is determined by the difficulty of the subject matter and by the document's organization and writing style.

Second, bad writing needs to be rewritten. Poorly written documents frequently cycle to others for help, thus wasting time of people other than the original writer.

Third, ineffective communication may obscure ideas so that discussions and decisions are needlessly drawn out.

Fourth, unclear or incomplete messages may require the receiver to gather more information. Some receivers may not bother to do so, leading to wrong decisions or a refusal to act.

## Wasted Efforts

Ineffective messages don't get results. A receiver who has to guess what the sender means may guess wrong. A reader who finds a letter or email unconvincing or insulting simply won't do what the message asks.

Like many business projects, the *Mars Climate Orbiter* involved a wide range of people in a range of locations. The programmers who wrote the software that controlled the spacecraft's engines worked in Great Britain and used metric measurements in their calculations, while the engineers who made the satellite's engines worked in the United States and used English measurements. Both teams assumed they were using the same measurement standards, neither team made any attempt to check, and no one else caught the error. With that failure, NASA lost a \$125 million satellite and years of effort, while gaining a major public embarrassment.<sup>23</sup>

## Lost Goodwill

Whatever the literal content of the words, every communication serves either to build or to undermine the image the audience has of the communicator.

Part of building a good image is taking the time to write correctly. Even organizations that have adopted casual dress still expect writing to appear professional and to be free from typos and grammatical errors.



Communication failures increased the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Source: USCG



One example of wasted effort arising from communication problems occurred when the *Mars Climate Orbiter* spacecraft lost contact with NASA mission control just after it arrived at Mars. A subsequent investigation revealed the main problem was a minor software-programming error caused by communication errors.

Source: NASA

**Figure 1.3****A Form Letter That Annoyed Customers**

**Nelson Manufacturing**

---

600 N. Main Street      317-281-3000  
 Indianapolis, IN 46204      fax 317-281-3001  
 www.nelson.comv

*Where are date,  
 Inside address?  
 No excuse for not adding these!*

Gentlemen: *Sexist!*

*Stuffy*

*Emphasizes the  
 writer, not the reader.*

*Wrong  
 word  
 (also  
 stuffy).* Please be advised that upon reviewing your credit file with us, we find the information  
 herein outdated. In an effort to expedite the handling of your future orders with us and to  
 allow us to open an appropriate line of credit for your company, we ask that you send an  
 updated list of vendor references. Any other additional financial information that you can  
 supply would be to both of our benefits. *Prove it!* *What  
 information?*

May we hear from you soon?

Sincerely,

*Main  
 point  
 is  
 buried.*

Messages also can create a poor image because of poor audience analysis and inappropriate style. The form letter printed in Figure 1.3 failed because it was stuffy and selfish. The comments in red show specific problems with the letter:

- **The language is stiff and legalistic.** Note the sexist “Gentlemen:” and obsolete “Please be advised” and “herein.”
- **The tone is selfish.** The letter is written from the writer’s point of view; there are no benefits for the reader. (The writer says there are, but without a shred of evidence, the claim isn’t convincing.)
- **The main point is buried.** The main point is in the middle of the long first paragraph. The middle is the least emphatic part of a paragraph.
- **The request is vague.** How many references does the supplier want? Are only vendor references OK, or would other credit references, such as banks, work too? Is the name of the reference enough, or is it necessary also to specify the line of credit, the average balance, the current balance, the years credit has been established, or other information? What “additional financial information” does the supplier want? Annual reports? Bank balance? Tax returns? The request sounds like an invasion of privacy, not a reasonable business practice.
- **Words are misused.** The use of *herein* for *therein* suggests either an ignorant writer or one who doesn’t care enough about the subject and the reader to use the right word.

## Legal Problems

Poor communication choices can lead to legal problems for individuals and organizations. The news is full of examples. Papa John’s pizza was hit with a lawsuit of a quarter billion dollars for text advertisements that customers claimed were spam.<sup>24</sup> Capital One Financial, the

large credit card company, agreed to pay \$210 million to settle allegations that its call center pressured customers into buying credit-protection products such as credit monitoring.<sup>25</sup>

Individual communications also can have legal consequences. Text messages revealed an affair between Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick and one of his aides; both the messages and the affair contradicted testimony the mayor had given under oath. Consequences included loss of office, jail time, and a \$1 million fine.

U.S. Representative Mark Foley of Florida resigned after his instant messages to House pages were published. Emails have helped bring about the fall of many executives, including

- Senior Enron executives.
- Hewlett-Packard chair Patricia Dunn.
- Walmart Vice Presidents Julie Roehm and Sean Womack.
- CIA Director David Petraeus.

One San Francisco law firm says 70% of its routine evidence now comes from emails.<sup>26</sup>

In particular, letters, memos, emails, and instant messages create legal obligations for organizations. When a lawsuit is filed against an organization, the lawyers for the plaintiffs have the right to subpoena documents written by employees of the organization. These documents then may be used as evidence, for instance, that an employer fired an employee without adequate notice or that a company knew about a safety defect but did nothing to correct it.

These documents also may be used as evidence in contexts the writer did not intend. This means a careless writer can create obligations that the organization does not mean to assume. For instance, a letter from a manager telling scouts they may not visit a factory floor because it is too dangerous could be used in a worker's compensation suit.<sup>27</sup>

Careful writers and speakers think about the larger social context in which their words may appear. What might those words mean to other people in the field? What might they mean to a judge and jury? What might they mean to an unintended audience in the general public?

## Basic Criteria for Effective Messages

Good business and administrative communication meets five basic criteria: it's clear, complete, and correct; it saves the audience's time; and it builds goodwill.

LO 1-5

- **It's clear.** An effective message clearly imparts its intended meaning. The audience doesn't have to work to figure out what the author means. Inaccurate and imprecise word choices impede comprehension. Often, you'll need to revise an entire sentence to incorporate more accurate or more precise words:

Imprecise: The first problem with the incentive program is that middle managers do not use good interpersonal skills in implementing it. For example, the hotel chef openly ridicules the program.

Better: The first problem with the incentive program is that some middle managers undercut it. For example, the hotel chef openly ridicules the program.

- **It's complete.** All of the audience questions are answered. The audience has enough information to evaluate the message and act on it.

- **It's correct.** The message is free from errors in spelling, capitalization, word choice, and grammar.
- **It saves the audience's time.** The style, organization, and visual or aural impact of the message help the audience read or hear, understand, and act on the information as quickly as possible. For example, effective messages use forecasting statements for organization, "Employee stock ownership programs (ESOPs) provide four benefits." Such statements tell readers what information will follow. Effective messages also use transition words, phrases, and sentences (such as "The second factor . . ." and "An alternative to this plan is . . .") to tell audiences whether the discussion is continuing on the same point or shifting.
- **It builds goodwill.** The message presents a positive image of the communicator and his or her organization. It treats the message recipient as a person, not a number. It cements a good relationship between the communicator and the audience.

Whether a message meets these five criteria depends on the interactions among the communicator, the audience, the purposes of the message, and the situation. No single set of words will work in all possible situations.

## Following Conventions

### LO 1-6

**Conventions** are widely accepted practices you routinely encounter. Common business communications have conventions. These conventions help people recognize, produce, and interpret different kinds of communications. Each chapter in this textbook presents conventions of traditional business documents. For example, Chapter 11 discusses conventions of job application letters and Chapter 16 talks about conventions of delivering oral presentations.

Conventions change over time. Consider how the conventions governing movies and television have changed just during your lifetime, allowing more explicit sex and violence. Similarly, conventions change in business. Paper memos have mostly given way to emails, and some emails are being replaced by text messaging.

The key to using conventions effectively, despite their changing nature, is to remember that they always need to fit the rhetorical situation—they always need to be adjusted for the particular audience, context, and purpose. For instance, Chapter 9 provides guidelines on constructing negative messages. However, you will need to adapt these guidelines based on the way your organization presents its negative messages. Some organizations will use a more formal tone than others; some present negative news bluntly, while others ease into it more gently.

Because every organization will be unique in the conventions it follows, the information presented in this text will provide a basic understanding of common elements for particular genres. You always will need to adjust the basics for your particular needs.

The best way to learn conventions in a particular workplace is to see what other workers are doing. How do they communicate with each other? Do their practices change when they communicate with superiors? What kinds of letters and emails do they send? How much do they email? What tone is preferred? Close observation will help your communications fit the conventions of your employer.

## Understanding and Analyzing Business Communication Situations

The best communicators are conscious of the context in which they communicate; they're aware of options.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- **What's at stake—to whom?** Think not only about your own needs, but also about the concerns your boss and your audience will have. Your message will be most effective if you think of the entire organizational context—and the larger context of shareholders, customers, and regulators. When the stakes are high, you'll need to take into account people's feelings as well as objective facts.
- **Should you send a message?** Sometimes, especially when you're new on the job, silence is the most tactful response. However, be alert for opportunities to learn, to influence, to make your case.
- **What channel should you use?** Paper documents and presentations are formal and give you considerable control over the message. Email, texting, tweeting, phone calls, and stopping by someone's office are less formal. Oral channels are better for group decision making, allow misunderstandings to be cleared up more quickly, and seem more personal. Sometimes you may need more than one message, in more than one channel.
- **What should you say?** Content for a message may not be obvious. How detailed should you be? Should you repeat information that the audience already knows? The answers will depend on the kind of message, your purposes, audiences, and the corporate culture. And you'll have to figure these things out for yourself, without detailed instructions.
- **How should you say it?** How you arrange your ideas—what comes first, second, and last—and the words you use shape the audience's response to what you say.

## Ethics

LO 1-7

See Figure 1.4 for an explanation of this and another icon used throughout this textbook.

Ethics concerns have become a major part of the business environment. Financial giants such as AIG, Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, Wachovia, and Washington Mutual had to be bailed out or went bankrupt. Banks, corporate officials, and rating agencies all were accused of unethical behavior. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) charged Goldman Sachs with fraud on securities linked to subprime mortgages; the firm settled out of court for more than half a billion dollars.

In a much larger lawsuit, Credit Suisse was sued for \$11.2 billion in losses from bundled mortgage securities. According to New York's attorney general, Credit Suisse "kept its investors in the dark about the inadequacy of its review procedures and defects in the loans," a major lapse in business communication. The bank also was accused of misrepresenting information in its SEC filings regarding when problem loans would be repurchased.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 1.4**

An explanation of the I and E icons used throughout this text to mark particular types of content.



= Intercultural communication

Marks content related to considerations for communicating across different cultural groups.



= Ethics

Marks content related to principles that develop and sustain ethical communicative behavior.

Ethics breaches have cost other organizations millions and even billions of dollars.

- GlaxoSmithKline incurred a \$3 billion fine for failing to report drug safety data. Previously, the company had pleaded guilty to charges that it knowingly sold adulterated drugs, including the antidepressant Paxil, and paid fines of \$750 million.<sup>29</sup>
- Siemens settled with the government for \$800 million in a bribery case; the document review alone cost an additional \$100 million.<sup>30</sup>
- In 2013, the credit-rating agency Standard & Poor's was sued by the U.S. government for \$5 billion; the suit alleged the agency inflated credit ratings for bundled mortgage securities.<sup>31</sup>
- In 2015, Volkswagen admitted to cheating American emissions standards on their diesel vehicles.<sup>32</sup> In 2016, a judge approved a \$14.7 billion settlement.<sup>33</sup>

The Ethics Resource Center, America's oldest nonprofit organization devoted to ethical practice, reported in its 2011 National Business Ethics Survey that 45% of employees surveyed personally witnessed unethical or illegal behavior; 35% of those witnesses did not report it. The most frequent misconducts were misusing company time, displaying abusive behavior, lying, abusing company resources, violating company Internet use policies, discriminating, displaying conflicts of interest, inappropriately using social networking, violating health or safety regulations, stealing, falsifying time reports, violating use of benefits, and sexually harassing others.<sup>34</sup>

Some common reasons for not reporting ethical misconduct are the following: it's standard practice here, it's not a big deal, it's not my responsibility (a particularly common reason for junior employees), and I want to be loyal to my colleagues/manager/company. (Stated negatively, this reason is "fear of consequences.")<sup>35</sup>

On the other side of the coin, positive ethical efforts also are getting attention. The United Nations Global Compact, "the world's largest corporate citizenship and sustainability initiative," focuses on human rights, labor, environment, and anticorruption measures. More than 7,000 businesses in 145 countries participate.<sup>36</sup> The Clinton Global Initiative has brought together 150 heads of state, 20 Nobel laureates, and hundreds of CEOs, who collectively have committed \$63 billion. This money already has had an impact on the lives of 400 million people in 180 countries.<sup>37</sup>

Business ethics include far more than corporate greed, international pacts, and philanthropy, of course. Much of business ethics involves routine practices, and many of these practices involve communication. How can we make our contracts with our clients and suppliers easier to understand? How can we best communicate with our employees? How much should our hospital disclose about infection rates?

Many basic, daily communication decisions involve an ethics component.

- Am I including all the information my audience needs?
- Am I expressing it in ways they will understand?
- Am I putting it in a format that helps my audience grasp it quickly?
- Am I including information for all segments of my audience?
- Am I taking information from other sources accurately?
- Am I acknowledging my sources?

Figure 1.5 elaborates on ethical components of communication. As it suggests, language, graphics, and document design—basic parts of any business document—can be

**Figure 1.5** Ethical Issues in Business Communications

Manner of conveying the message	Qualities of the message	Larger organizational context of the message
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the language clear to the audience? Does it respect the audience?</li> <li>• Do the words balance the organization's right to present its best case with its responsibility to present its message honestly?</li> <li>• Do graphics help the audience understand? Or are graphics used to distract or confuse?</li> <li>• Does the design of the document make reading easy? Does document design attempt to make readers skip key points?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the message an ethical one that is honest and sensitive to all stakeholders?</li> <li>• Have interested parties been able to provide input?</li> <li>• Does the audience get all the information it needs to make a good decision or is information withheld?</li> <li>• Is information communicated so the audience can grasp it or are data "dumped" without any context?</li> <li>• Are the arguments logical? Are they supported with adequate evidence?</li> <li>• Are the emotional appeals used fairly? Do they supplement logic rather than substitute for it?</li> <li>• Does the organizational pattern lead the audience without undue manipulation?</li> <li>• Does the message use good sources? Are the sources used honestly? Are they documented?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the organization treat its employees? How do employees treat each other?</li> <li>• How sensitive is the organization to stakeholders such as the people who live near its factories, stores, or offices and to the general public?</li> <li>• Does the organization support employees' efforts to be honest, fair, and ethical?</li> <li>• Do the organization's actions in making products, buying supplies, and marketing goods and services stand up to ethical scrutiny?</li> <li>• Is the organization a good corporate citizen, helpful rather than harmful to the community in which it exists?</li> <li>• Are the organization's products or services a good use of scarce resources?</li> </ul>

ethical or manipulative. Persuading and gaining compliance—activities at the heart of business and organizational life—can be done with respect or contempt for customers, co-workers, and subordinates.

In these days of instant communication, you, like the organization in which you work, always must act in an ethical manner. Consequences for not doing so are becoming more common as disgruntled colleagues and employees now have ample means for whistle-blowing.

There are also positive reasons—moral and business—for ethical behavior. As the Ethics Resource Center notes, customers and employees are attracted to ethical businesses. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, a professor at Harvard Business School, argues in her book *SuperCorp: How Vanguard Companies Create Innovation, Profits, Growth, and Social Good* that companies desiring to do good have a competitive advantage. In fact, a benevolent viewpoint provides a wider view of society and thus awareness of new opportunities for growth and innovation by solving the problems of unmet needs.

Many religions and philosophers have offered advice on how to be ethical. Some of the more familiar advice are the Golden Rule (do unto others as you would have them do unto you) and the utilitarian principle that an action should produce the greatest

happiness for the greatest number of people. Business leaders also have given advice. For example, Tony Hsieh, the founder and CEO of Zappos, offer this useful ethics guideline in his book *Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profits, Passion, and Purpose*:

As a guiding principle in life for anything I do, I try to ask myself, *What would happen if everyone in the world acted in the same way? What would the world look like? What would the net effect be on the overall happiness in the world?* [Hsieh's italics]

This thought experiment has been useful to me when thinking about whether to share how we do things at Zappos, or whether to get upset at the waitress who accidentally got my order wrong, or whether to hold the door open for a stranger who's a slightly inconvenient distance away.

## Corporate Culture

### LO 1-8

Another strong influence on the business environment is corporate culture (see Chapter 2 for ways to analyze corporate culture). Corporate cultures vary widely. They range from formal—with individual offices, jackets, and hierarchical lines of command—to informal—with open office space, casual attire, and individually empowered workers. Characteristics of popular corporate cultures include flexible work arrangements, profit sharing, information sharing, good training, health insurance, and wellness programs.

Both large and small companies get positive publicity for their corporate cultures.

- Google is known for company gyms, well-stocked snack rooms, restaurants, and casual work attire.
- Ogilvy & Mather's Canton, China, office has a carnival theme to remind employees of the company's mission to "stay fresh." The décor includes a full-size carousel, carousel horses throughout the office, circus lights, and a fake Ferris wheel, whose carriages serve as small meeting rooms.<sup>38</sup>
- Dealer.com offers subsidized meals at its café, with organic and locally grown food, wellness seminars on exercise and stress management, chair massages, bike rentals, tennis and basketball courts, fitness center, and half-price ski passes. The company supports its sports teams, including softball, volleyball, soccer, bowling, and dragon-boat racing.<sup>39</sup>



Some employees use exercise balls as desk chairs. The balls require employees to use core muscles to maintain posture. Employees say they are also fun because they can bounce.

©Seth Joel/Getty Images

Two companies in the same field may have very different cultures. When Procter & Gamble bought Gillette, the company expected a smooth marriage between the world's number-one toothbrush, Oral-B, and the world's number-two toothpaste, Crest. But cultural differences caused problems. Gillette employees found P&G's culture rigid, its decision making slow. Gillette employees also had to learn P&G's famous acronyms, such as CIB (consumer is boss) and FMOT (first moment of truth, when consumers notice the product). P&G people sent memos; Gillette people called meetings.<sup>40</sup>

Wise companies also use effective corporate cultures to retain hourly workers. Joie de Vivre Hospitality has a turnover rate that is half the industry average. The CEO attributes the low rate to a corporate culture that listens to employees, enacts some of their suggestions, and tries to make work fun. In addition to awards, the company offers free classes on subjects such as English as a second language and sponsors parties, annual retreats, and regularly scheduled dinners.<sup>41</sup>

## How to Solve Business Communication Problems

LO 1-9

When you're faced with a business communication problem, you need to develop a solution that will both solve the organization's problem and meet the psychological needs of the people involved. The strategies in this section will help you solve the problems in this book. Almost all of these strategies also can be applied to problems you encounter on the job. Use this process to create good messages.

- Gather knowledge and brainstorm solutions.
- Answer the five questions for analysis in Figure 1.6.
- Organize your information to fit your audiences, your purposes, and the context.
- Make your document visually inviting.
- Revise your draft to create a friendly, businesslike, positive style.
- Edit your draft for standard spelling, punctuation, and grammar; double-check names and numbers.
- Use the response you get to plan future messages.

### Gather Knowledge and Brainstorm Solutions.

Problem solving usually starts by gathering knowledge. What are the facts? What can you infer from the information you're given? What additional information might be helpful? Where could you get it? What emotional complexities are involved? This information will usually start to suggest some solutions, but the first solution you think of may not be best. Develop several. Then evaluate them in terms of your audience and purposes. You will learn more about gathering knowledge in Chapter 15 and more about brainstorming in Chapter 8.

### Answer the Five Questions for Analysis.

The five questions in Figure 1.6 help you analyze your audience(s), purpose(s), and the organizational context.

**1. Who Is (Are) Your Audience(s)?** What audience characteristics are relevant for this particular message? If you are writing or speaking to more than one person, how do the people in your audience differ? How much does your audience know about your topic? How will they respond to your message? What objections might they have?

Some characteristics of your audience will be irrelevant; focus on ones that matter *for this message*. Whenever you address several people or a group, try to identify the economic, cultural, or situational differences that may affect how various subgroups may respond to what you have to say. For a more complete audience analysis, see the questions in Chapter 2.

**Figure 1.6**

#### Questions for Analysis

1. Who is (are) your audience(s)?
2. What are your purposes in communicating?
3. What information must your message include?
4. How can you build support for your position? What reasons or benefits will your audience find convincing?
5. What aspects of the total situation may be relevant?

**2. What Are Your Purposes in Communicating?** What must this message do to meet the organization's needs? What must it do to meet your own needs? What do you want your audience to do? To think or feel? List all your purposes, major and minor.

Even in a simple message, you may have several related purposes: to announce a new policy; to make the audience aware of the policy's provisions and requirements; and to have them feel that the policy is a good one, that the organization cares about its employees, and that you are a competent communicator and manager.

**3. What Information Must Your Message Include?** Make a list of the points that must be included; check your draft to make sure you include them all. To include information without emphasizing it, put it in the middle of a paragraph or document and present it as briefly as possible.

**4. How Can You Build Support for Your Position? What Reasons or Benefits Will Your Audience Find Convincing?** Brainstorm to develop reasons for your decision, the logic behind your argument, and possible benefits to the audience if they do as you ask. Reasons and audience benefits do not have to be monetary. Making the audience's job easier or more pleasant is a good benefit. In an informative or persuasive message, identify multiple audience benefits. In your message, use those that you can develop most easily and effectively.

Be sure the benefits are adapted to your audience. Many people do not identify closely with their organizations; the fact that the organization benefits from a policy will help the individual only if the saving or profit is passed directly on to the employees. Instead, savings and profits often are eaten up by returns to stockholders, bonuses to executives, and investments in plants and equipment or in research and development.

**5. What Aspects of the Total Situation May Be Relevant?** Should you consider the economy? The time of year? Morale in the organization? Any special circumstances? The organization may be prosperous or going through hard times; it may have just been reorganized or may be stable. All these different situations will affect what you say and how you say it.

Think about the news, the economy, the weather. Think about the general business and regulatory climate, especially as it affects the organization specified in the problem. Use the real world as much as possible. Think about interest rates, business conditions, and the economy. Is the industry doing well? Is the government agency enjoying general support? Think about the time of year. If it's fall when you write, is your business in a seasonal slowdown after a busy summer? Gearing up for the Christmas shopping rush? Or going along at a steady pace unaffected by seasons?

To answer these questions, draw on your experience, your courses, and your common sense. Read the *Wall Street Journal* or look at a company's website. Sometimes you even may want to phone a local businessperson to get information.

## **Organize Your Information to Fit Your Audiences, Your Purposes, and the Situation.**

You'll learn different psychological patterns of organization in Chapters 8, 9, and 10. For now, remember these three basic principles:

- Put good news first.
- In general, put the main point or question first. In the subject line or first paragraph, make it clear that you're writing about something that is important to the reader.
- Disregard the above point and approach the subject indirectly when you must persuade a reluctant audience.

## Make Your Document Visually Inviting.

A well-designed document is easier to read and builds goodwill. To make a document visually attractive:

- Use subject lines to orient the reader quickly.
- Use headings to group related ideas.
- Use lists and indented sections to emphasize subpoints and examples.
- Number points that must be followed in sequence.
- Use short paragraphs—usually eight typed lines or fewer.

If you plan these design elements before you begin composing, you'll save time and the final document will probably be better.

The best medium for a document depends on how it will be used. For example, a document that will be updated frequently may need to be on a website so the reader easily can obtain the most current information. Chapters 5 and 13 will provide more information on the design of documents and visuals.

## Revise Your Draft to Create a Friendly, Businesslike, Positive Style.

In addition to being an organizational member or a consumer, your audience has feelings just as you do. Communication that keeps the audience in mind uses **you-attitude** (see Chapter 3). Read your message as if you were in your audience's shoes. How would you feel if *you* received it?

Good business and administrative communication is both friendly and businesslike. If you're too stiff, you put extra distance between your audience and yourself. If you try to be too chummy, you'll sound unprofessional. When you communicate with strangers, use simple, everyday words and make your message as personal and friendly as possible. When you write to friends, remember that your message may be read by people you've never even heard of: avoid slang, clichés, and "in" jokes.

Sometimes you must mention limitations, drawbacks, or other negative elements, but don't dwell on them. People will respond better to you and your organization if you seem confident. Expect success, not failure. If you don't believe that what you're writing about is a good idea, why should they?

You emphasize the positive when you

- Put positive information first, give it more space or time, or set it off visually in an indented list.
- Eliminate negative words whenever possible.
- Focus on what is possible, not what is impossible.

## Edit Your Draft for Standard English; Double-Check Names and Numbers.

Businesspeople care about correctness in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. If your grasp of mechanics is fuzzy, if standard English is not your native dialect, or if English is not your native language, you'll need to memorize rules and perhaps find a good book or a tutor to help you. Even software spelling and grammar checkers require the writer to make decisions. If you know how to write correctly but rarely take the time to do so, now is the time to begin to edit and proofread to eliminate careless errors. Correctness in usage, punctuation, and grammar is covered in Appendix B.

Always proofread your document before you send it out. Double-check the reader's name, any numbers, and the first and last paragraphs. Chapter 5 will provide more tips on revising and editing communication.

### Use the Response You Get to Plan Future Messages.

Evaluate the **feedback**, or response, you get. The real test of any message is “Did you get what you wanted, when you wanted it?” If the answer is *no*, then the message has failed—even if the grammar is perfect, the words elegant, the approach creative, the document stunningly attractive. If the message fails, you need to find out why.

Analyze your successes, too. You want to know *why* your message worked. There has to be a reason, and if you can find what it is, you'll be more successful more often.

## Summary by Learning Objectives

### LO 1-1 What the benefits of good communication are.

Communication helps organizations and the people in them achieve their goals. People put things in writing to create a record, to convey complex data, to make things convenient for the reader, to save money, and to convey their own messages more effectively.

### LO 1-2 Why you need to be able to communicate well.

- The three basic purposes of business and administrative communication are to inform, to request or persuade, and to build goodwill. Most messages have more than one purpose.
- The ability to write and speak well becomes increasingly important as you rise in an organization.

### LO 1-3 What the costs of communication are.

Common communication costs include writing time, document cycling, printing, mailing, and electronic storage of copies.

### LO 1-4 What the costs of poor communication are.

Poor writing wastes time, wastes effort, and jeopardizes goodwill.

### LO 1-5 What the basic criteria for effective messages are.

Good business and administrative writing meets five basic criteria: it's clear, complete, and correct; it saves the reader's time; and it builds goodwill.

### LO 1-6 What role conventions play in business communication.

Common business communications have conventions, as do organizations. Business communicators need to know how to adjust conventions to fit a particular audience, context, and purpose.

### LO 1-7 Why ethics are so important in business communication.

The economic news continues to create concern over lapses in business ethics. On the other hand, positive ethical efforts also are increasing.

### LO 1-8 How corporate culture impacts the business environment.

Corporate cultures range from informal to formal and impact such widely diverse areas as worker performance and sales.

### LO 1-9 How to solve business communication problems.

- To evaluate a specific document, we must know the interactions among the writer, the reader(s), the purposes of the message, and the context. No single set of words will work for all readers in all situations.
- To understand business communication situations, ask the following questions:
  - What's at stake—to whom?
  - Should you send a message?
  - What channel should you use?
  - What should you say?
  - How should you say it?
- The following process helps create effective messages:
  - Gather knowledge and brainstorm solutions.
  - Answer the analysis questions in Figure 1.6.
  - Organize your information to fit your audiences, your purposes, and the context.
  - Make your document visually inviting.
  - Revise your draft to create a friendly, businesslike, positive style.
  - Edit your draft for standard English; double-check names and numbers.
  - Use the response you get to plan future messages.

## Exercises and Cases

### 1.1 Reviewing the Chapter

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why do businesses need to be able to communicate well? (LO 1-1)</li> <li>2. Why do you need to be able to communicate well? (LO 1-1)</li> <li>3. What are some flawed assumptions about workplace communication? What is the reality for each myth? (LO 1-2)</li> <li>4. What are the costs of communication? (LO 1-3)</li> <li>5. What are the costs of poor communication? (LO 1-4)</li> <li>6. What are the basic criteria for effective messages? (LO 1-5)</li> <li>7. What role do conventions play in business communication? (LO 1-6)</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. What are some positive ethical efforts that are getting attention? (LO 1-7)</li> <li>9. What are some ethical components of communication? (LO 1-7)</li> <li>10. What are some elements of corporate culture? How do they affect business? (LO 1-8)</li> <li>11. What are the components of a good problem-solving method for business communication opportunities? (LO 1-9)</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

### 1.2 Assessing Your Punctuation and Grammar Skills

To help you see where you need to improve in grammar and punctuation, take the Diagnostic Test, B.1, Appendix B.

### 1.3 Messages for Discussion I—Asking for a Class

The following are emails from various students to Dr. Violet Sands, who is a professor in the English Department. These students are wondering if Dr. Sands would let them register for her already-full class (English 320: Business Communication).

Each email shows a different way a student could make a request of Dr. Sands. How well does each message meet the needs of the reader and the writer? Is the message clear, complete, and correct?

1. Hi Violet,

My name is Jake and I was wondering if you had any extra seats in your English 320 class. See, I'm a senior and I really need to take your class so I can graduate. I don't know what else to do. I didn't take it last year cuz I really didn't want to.

I'm desperate. Help me out.

Jake
2. Hello Sands,

I'm sorry to bother you, but I really, really need to get into your English 320 class. My advisor totally screwed up my schedule and I didn't know I needed to take this class. It's so weird because I shouldn't have to take this class anyway, but whatever. So, if you could just add me into your class, that would be great.

Thanks,

Ally
3. Dr. Sands,

Good morning. I hate to email you right before the semester begins, but I have a request. When I tried to register for your Eng 320 course, the website stated the course was full. I was wondering if I could possibly be put on a list to add the course just in case someone drops it? I am very interested in this course and would love to take it this semester if at all possible.

Thank you so much for your time,

Christine

4.

Dear Dr. Sands,

Do u have anymore seats open in your class? I think its 302 or 320 or something like that. Anyways, it would be cool if you would let me into the class. Sorry for emailing right at the last minute, but I didn't know what else to do.

You are the best,  
Andrew

## 1.4 Messages for Discussion II—Responding to Rumors

The Acme Corporation has been planning to acquire Best Products, and Acme employees are worried about how the acquisition will affect them. Ed Zeplin, Acme's human resource manager, has been visiting the Acme chat sites and sees a dramatic rise in the number of messages spreading rumors about layoffs. Most of the rumors are false.

The following messages are possible responses that Ed can post to the chat sites. How well does each message meet the needs of the reader, the writer, and the organization? Is the message clear, complete, and correct? Does it save the reader's time? Does it build goodwill?

1.

It Will Be Great!

Author: L. Ed Zeplin, HR

Date: Tuesday, May 23

I am happy to tell you that the HR news is good. Two months ago, the CEO told me about the merger, and I have been preparing a human resource plan ever since.

I want you to know about this because morale has been bad, and it shouldn't be. You really should wait for the official announcements, and you'll see that the staffing needs will remain strong. My department has been under a lot of pressure, but if you'll be patient, we'll explain everything—the staffing, the compensation.

Our plan should be ready by Monday, and then if you have any questions, just contact your HR rep.

2.

HR Staffing

Author: HR Boss

Date: Tuesday, May 23

The rumors are false. Just ask anyone in HR. There will be no layoffs.

3.

Don't Believe the Rumors

Author: lezeplin@acme.com

Date: Tuesday, May 23

Acme has 475 employees, and Best Products has 132 employees. Our human resource plan for next year calls for 625 employees. If you do the math, you can see that there will be no layoffs. Rather, we will be hiring 18 employees. Of course, as we consolidate operations with Best, there will be some redeployments. However, our

plan indicates that we will be able to retain our current staff. All employees are valued at Acme, as our current benefits package testifies.

Our HR plan is based on the best analytic techniques and a business forecast by a top consulting firm. If you're an employee, you should review our business plan, at the Our Goals page on Acme's intranet. Everyone should read Acme's mission statement on our home page, [www.acme.com/homepage.html](http://www.acme.com/homepage.html).

4. Layoff Rumors Do Acme a Disservice

Author: Zeplin in HR

Date: Tuesday, 23 May

If you come here to get your company information, you aren't getting the straight story. The people posting to this discussion board are spreading false rumors, not the truth. If you want to know the truth about Acme, ask the people who have access to the information.

As HR manager, I can assure you we won't be laying off employees after the merger with Best Products. I'm the one who approves the staffing plan, so I should know. If people would ask me, instead of reading the negative, whining lies at this site, they would know the facts, too.

If people really cared about job security, they would be working and exceeding their goals, rather than wasting their time in rumor-mongering on message boards. Hard work: that's the key to success!

5. The True Story about Layoffs

Author: lezeplin@acme.com

Date: Tuesday, 23 May

Whenever there is a merger or acquisition, rumors fly. It's human nature to turn to rumors when a situation seems uncertain. The case of Acme acquiring Best Products is no exception, so I'm not surprised to see rumors about layoffs posted on this message board.

Have no fear! I am working closely with our CEO and with the CEO and human resource manager at Best Products, and we all agree that our current staff is a valuable asset to Acme, to Best, and to our combined companies in the future. We have no plans to lay off any of our valued people. I will continue monitoring this message board and will post messages as I am able to disclose more details about our staffing plans. In the meantime, employees should watch for official information in the company newsletter and on our intranet.

We care about our people! If employees ever have questions about our plans and policies, they should contact me directly.

L. Ed Zeplin, HR Manager

### 1.5 Discussing Communication Barriers

With a small group, discuss some of the communication barriers you have witnessed in the workplace or classroom. What confuses audiences? What upsets them? What creates ill will?

What causes loss of interest? Try to pinpoint exactly how the communication broke down.

### 1.6 Identifying Poor Communicators

Almost everyone has come in contact with someone who is a poor communicator. With a small group, discuss some of your experiences with poor communicators either in the workplace or in the classroom. Why was the communicator ineffective?

What would have made communication clearer? After your discussion, develop a list of poor communication traits and what can be done to overcome them.

### 1.7 Identifying Changing Conventions

This chapter talks about the need to be aware of conventions and how they shift with time. What are some changing classroom communication conventions you have observed in your

classes? What are some changing communication conventions you have observed at your workplace, or those of your family and friends? With a small group, discuss your examples.

### 1.8 Understanding the Role of Communication in Your Organization

Interview your work supervisor to learn about the kinds and purposes of communication in your organization. Your questions could include the following:

- What kinds of communication (e.g., emails, presentations) are most important in this organization?
- What communications do you create? Are they designed to inform, to persuade, to build goodwill—or to do a combination?
- What communications do you receive? Are they designed to inform, to persuade, to build goodwill—or to do a combination?
- Who are your most important audiences within the organization?

- Who are your most important external audiences?
- What are the challenges of communicating in this organization?
- What kinds of documents and presentations does the organization prefer?

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share your results with a small group of students.
- b. Present your results in an email to your instructor.
- c. Join with a group of students to make a group presentation to the class.
- d. Post your results online to the class.

### 1.9 Protecting Privacy Online

As companies demand ever more accurate audiences to whom they can pitch their products and services, the debate over online tracking versus privacy continues. For example, e-books allow sellers to track not only which books you buy, but how often you open them, how many hours you spend reading them, how far you get in them, and what you underline in them.<sup>42</sup>

1. Working in small groups, discuss some of the challenges you see to protecting your privacy on the Internet.
  - Should companies be allowed to track your online activity? Is it OK if they notify you they are tracking you? Do you like targeted placement ads, similar to Google's recommendations for you? Where do you find a balance between allowing Internet sites to use your information to provide better service and protecting your privacy?
  - Are employers justified in monitoring employees' email, Twitter, and Internet usage on company machines?

- Are employers justified in monitoring employees' Facebook accounts? Do you think it is fair when employees get fired for comments they post on their Facebook site?
  - What do you think of companies such as Google tracking searches to produce sites like Google Flu Trends, which shows where people are getting sick during flu season?
2. The Federal Trade Commission is considering a "Do Not Track" option. Like the Do Not Call Registry, it would offer consumers a way to avoid some electronic marketing. See <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/reporter/privacy/donottrack.shtml> for more information. If such an option becomes available, would you use it? Suppose that big websites such as Google or Facebook started dropping Do Not Track customers. How would that action influence your opinion? Write an email to your instructor explaining your decision.

### 1.10 Making Ethical Choices



Indicate whether you consider each of the following actions ethical, unethical, or a gray area. Which of the actions would you do? Which would you feel uncomfortable doing? Which would you refuse to do?

Discuss your answers with a small group of classmates. In what ways did knowing you would share with a group change your answers?

1. Taking home office supplies (e.g., pens, markers, calculators, etc.) for personal use.
2. Inflating your evaluation of a subordinate because you know that only people ranked *excellent* will get pay raises.
3. Updating your Facebook page and visiting the pages of friends during business hours.

4. Writing a feasibility report about a new product and de-emphasizing test results that show it could cause cancer.
5. Designing an ad campaign for a cigarette brand.
6. Working as an accountant for a company that makes or advertises cigarettes.
7. Telling a job candidate that the company “usually” grants cost-of-living raises every six months, even though you know that the company is losing money and plans to cancel cost-of-living raises for the next year.
8. Laughing at the racist or sexist jokes a client makes, even though you find them offensive.

### 1.11 Analyzing Business Ethics



New Oriental Education & Technology Group offers Chinese students intensive courses to prepare for SAT, GRE, and TOEFL exams. The object of the courses is to enable the students to achieve scores that will get them into American colleges and universities. The courses provide traditional prep help, such as cramming vocabulary words, but they also offer more controversial techniques.

- The courses avail themselves of websites where students download the test questions they remember immediately after the exam. Because the tests do recycle some questions to ensure score consistency over time, the courses can prep students for actual exam questions.
- They provide tricks (e.g., females in the test passages are always smarter than males) that help students choose correct answers just by looking at the choices, without understanding the passages.
- Because many of the students are good at math, they recommend that five minutes into the math section, their students should flip back to the reading section and finish it. Flipping is prohibited, but this timing helps students

escape the attention of the proctors, who look for it at the beginning and end of each test section.

- They help students prepare essays and speeches on topics—such as biographies of famous Americans—that can be memorized and adapted to many situations, thus avoiding extemporaneous performances.

The upside of these efforts is that many of the students do fulfill dreams of getting into American schools. The downside is that many of these same students have such poor English skills that they cannot understand the lectures or participate in class discussions. Nor can they write class papers without help. Unfortunately, they score so well that they even sometimes test out of the transitional programs many schools have to help students with shaky English skills.<sup>43</sup>

1. Is New Oriental an ethical business?
2. What are New Oriental’s effects on its students?
3. Why do American schools accept these students?
4. What could be done to make the situation more ethical?

### 1.12 Introducing Yourself to Your Collaborative Writing Group

Write an email (about a single-spaced page if printed) introducing yourself to the other students in your collaborative writing group. (See Appendix A for examples of email format.) Include the following topics:

**Background:** What is your major? What special areas of knowledge do you have? What have you done in terms of school, extracurricular activities, jobs, and family life?

**Previous experience in groups:** What groups have you worked in before? Are you usually a leader, a follower, or a bit of both? Are you interested in a quality product? In maintaining harmony in the group? In working efficiently? What do you like most about working in groups? What do you like least?

**Work and composing style:** Do you like to talk out ideas while they’re in a rough stage or work them out on paper before you discuss them? Would you rather have a complete outline before you start writing or just a general idea? Do you want to have a detailed schedule of everything that

has to be done and who will do it, or would you rather “go with the flow”? Do you work best under pressure, or do you want to have assignments ready well before the due date?

**Areas of expertise:** What can you contribute to the group in terms of knowledge and skills? Are you good at brainstorming ideas? Researching? Designing charts? Writing? Editing? Word processing? Managing the flow of work? Maintaining group cohesion?

**Goals for collaborative assignments:** What do you hope to accomplish this term? Where does this course fit into your priorities?

Use appropriate headings and a conversational writing style; edit your final draft for mechanical and grammatical correctness. A good email will enable others in your group to see you as an individual. Use details to make your writing vivid and interesting. Remember that one of your purposes is to make your readers look forward to working with you!

### 1.13 Describing Your Writing Experiences and Goals

Write an email (about a single-spaced page if printed) to your instructor describing the experiences you've had writing and what you'd like to learn about writing during this course. (See Appendix A for examples of email format.)

Answer several of the following questions:

- What memories do you have of writing? What made writing fun or frightening in the past?
- What have you been taught about writing? List the topics, rules, and advice you remember.
- What kinds of writing have you done in school? How long have the papers been?
- How has your school writing been evaluated? Did the instructor mark or comment on mechanics and grammar? Style? Organization? Logic? Content? Audience analysis and adaptation? Have you gotten extended comments on your papers? Have instructors in different classes had the

same standards, or have you changed aspects of your writing for different classes?

- What voluntary writing have you done—journals, poems, stories, essays? Has this writing been just for you or has some of it been shared or published?
- Have you ever written on a job or in a student or volunteer organization? Have you ever edited other people's writing? What have these experiences led you to think about real-world writing?
- What do you see as your current strengths and weaknesses in writing skills? What skills do you think you'll need in the future? What kinds of writing do you expect to do after you graduate?

Use appropriate headings and a conversational writing style; edit your final draft for mechanical and grammatical correctness.

## Notes

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