

Thirteenth Edition

Business Communication





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Business Communication

KITTY O. LOCKER

The Ohio State University

JEANINE ELISE AUNE

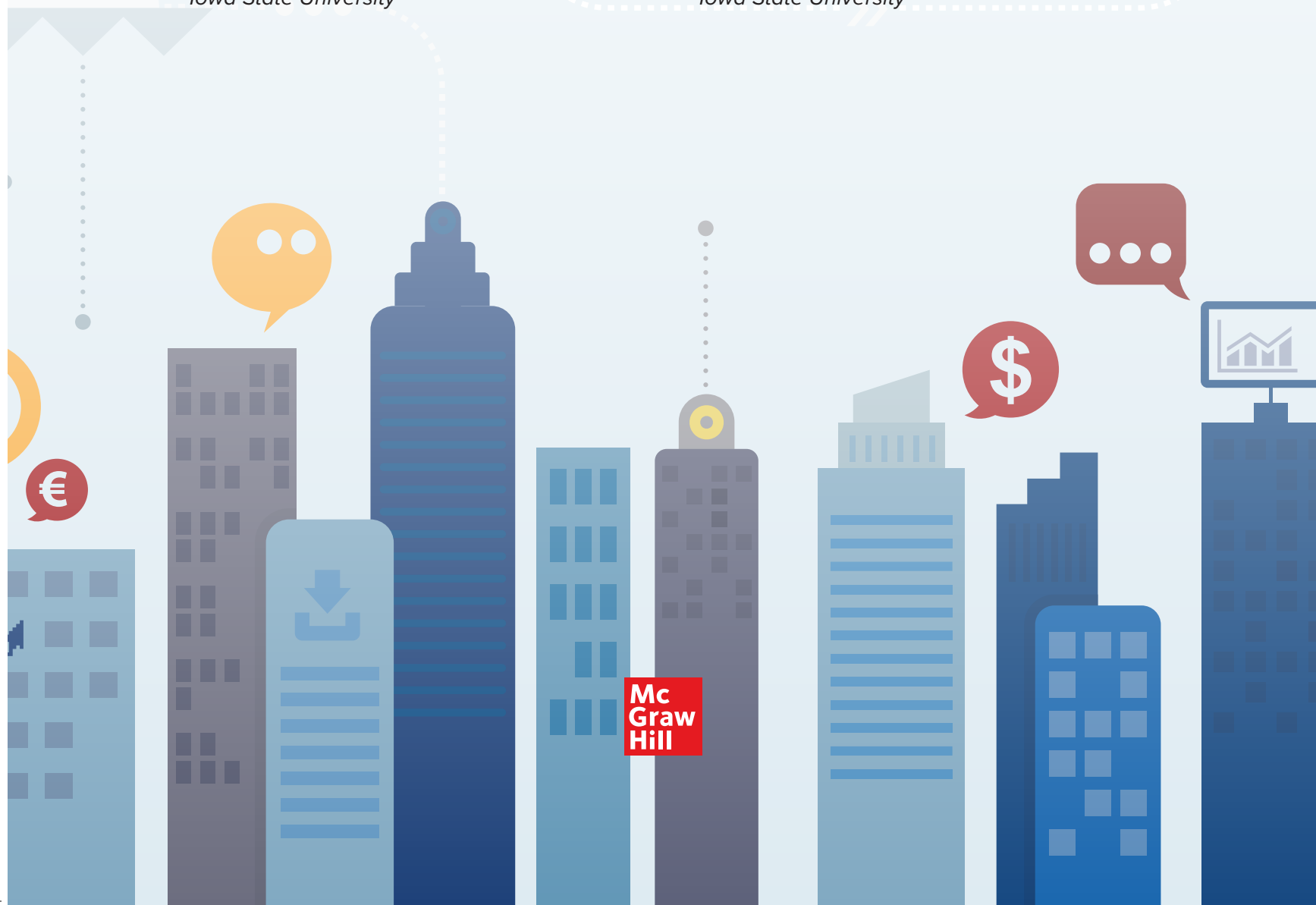
Iowa State University

JO MACKIEWICZ

Iowa State University

DONNA S. KIENZLER

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BUSINESS COMMUNICATION, THIRTEENTH EDITION

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 LWI 27 26 25 24 23 22

ISBN 978-1-264-06751-0 (bound edition)

MHID 1-264-06751-8 (bound edition)

ISBN 978-1-266-07742-5 (loose-leaf edition)

MHID 1-266-07742-1 (loose-leaf edition)

Portfolio Director: *Anke Weekes*

Senior Product Developer: *Anne Leung*

Marketing Manager: *Trina Maurer*

Project Manager, Core Content: *Amy Gehl*

Project Manager, Assessment Content: *Vanessa McClune*

Senior Buyer: *Susan K. Culbertson*

Design: *Matt Diamond*

Content Licensing Specialist: *Gina Oberbroeckling*

Cover Image: *DrAfter123/Getty Images*

Compositor: *MPS Limited*

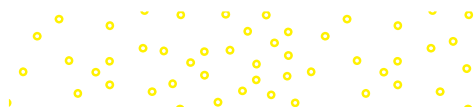
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cataloging-in-Publication Data has been requested from the Library of Congress.

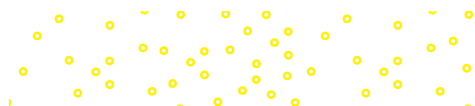
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Dedication

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





The Authors

Jo Mackiewicz is a Professor of Rhetoric and Professional Communication at Iowa State University. Her research has been published in a range of journals, including *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, and the *WAC Journal*. With Isabelle Thompson, she wrote *Talk about Writing: The Tutoring Strategies of Experienced Writing Center Tutors*. She also wrote *The Aboutness of Writing Center Talk: A Corpus-Driven and Discourse Analysis* and *Writing Center Talk over Time: A Mixed-Method Study*. The latter won the International Writing Center Association's 2019 Outstanding Book award.

Jeanine Elise Aune is a Teaching Professor at Iowa State University, where she serves as the Advanced Communication Director. Her work has appeared in the *Journal of Natural Resource & Life Sciences Education*, the *WAC Journal*, and the *Journal of Microbiology & Biology Education*. She has received several awards for her work with Iowa State's learning communities, including the LAS Learning Community Leadership Award, and in 2017 she received the Outstanding Achievement in Teaching Award from her college.

Donna S. Kienzler is a Professor Emeritus of English at Iowa State University, where she taught in the Rhetoric and Professional Communication program. As the Director of Advanced Communication, she oversaw more than 120 sections of business and technical communication annually. She was also an Assistant Director of the university's Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, where she taught classes, seminars, and workshops on pedagogy; directed graduate student programming; and directed the Preparing Future Faculty program, a career-training program for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Her research focused on pedagogy and ethics.



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Business Communication

While staying true to its tradition of delivering a high standard of business communication pedagogy and resources, the 13th edition further modernizes the chapter content and organization to make it more relevant to students today. As in each prior edition, the foundation of the 13th edition is a rhetorical approach to business communication. Each chapter underscores the importance of analyzing each communicative situation in terms of audience, purpose, and context. This rhetorical approach gives students the ability to choose the most applicable genre and to generate an effective business message no matter the situation. Finally, the 13th edition includes many updated exercises and several new exercises, as well as new instructor resources.

What's New?

We have worked hard to update *Business Communication* from its 12th edition to its 13th. We have added new content that instructors have asked for, such as examples of business plans and sales proposals and elaborated discussion of social media use for business. We've updated content, particularly in relation to communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have painstakingly cut repetitious content, streamlining each section within each chapter so that it makes its point clearly and efficiently. We have also reorganized, regrouping like with like, so that students can more readily find the content they need. We've also used singular *they*, *them*, and *their* as generic third-person pronouns when the pronoun referent is indefinite (for example, *everyone*) and when a person's gender is unknown, in accordance with APA style. And we've simplified the page layout, eliminating unnecessary design elements, such as horizontal lines before and after bulleted lists. In short, we have overhauled the textbook to create a modernized and elegant 13th edition.

The following list delineates some of the specific changes that we made.


CHAPTER 1

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case about Wells Fargo.
- Reorganized and updated content about basic criteria for effective messages and about questions for analyzing a rhetorical situation. Both sections now stress ethical choices.

CHAPTER 2

- Replaced the chapter-opening case with a new case about Stitch-Fix.
- Updated benefits and descriptions of potential communication channels, including newer social media.
- Updated material on and examples about *you*-attitude, positive emphasis, and tone.
- Added a section on creating inclusivity.
- Updated platform-specific best practices for creating goodwill.

CHAPTER 3

- Added chapter-opening case study about disinformation having a direct negative effect on a business.
 - Updated material about research from previous edition's chapter about writing reports, including conducting primary research, analyzing search results, and using secondary research.
 - Developed content about evaluating sources and reading sources critically.
 - Updated and elaborated content on citation and documentation.
- 



CHAPTER 4

- Introduced the concepts of oppressive language and inclusive language.

CHAPTER 5

- Revised and updated content throughout the chapter.

CHAPTER 6

- Updated chapter-opening case to focus on the increased and increasing expectation that people work collaboratively.
- Added content about innovation coming from working collaboratively in diverse teams.
- Elaborated content on the configuration and purpose of teams.
- Streamlined chapter by removing separate sections on technology and incorporated content about working virtually throughout the chapter.

CHAPTER 7

- Revised and updated content throughout the chapter.

CHAPTER 8

- Clearly differentiated between charts and graphs.
- Added discussion about text tables, flow charts, organizational charts, and scatter-plot graphs.
- Added new examples of text tables, flow charts, organizational charts, scatter-plot graphs, and infographics.
- Trimmed extraneous discussion and examples of maps.

CHAPTER 9

- Updated the chapter-opening case.
- Shifted content about platform-specific communication to Chapter 2.

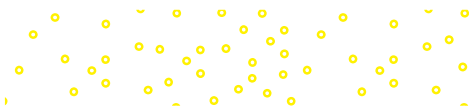
CHAPTER 10

- Reorganized sections.
- Shifted content about platform-specific communication to Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 11

- Updated the chapter-opening case.
- Updated visuals.
- Shifted content about platform-specific communication to Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 12

- Added a new chapter-opening case about a rejected proposal.
 - Added a section on typical proposal content and organization.
 - Added annotated examples of sales, grant, and business proposals.
- 



CHAPTER 13

- Added a section on white papers.

CHAPTER 14

- Updated the chapter-opening case.
- Revised examples of presentation slides.
- Added a section about online presentations (e.g., via WebEx).

CHAPTER 15

- Updated online resources for job listings, job-search advice, company information.

CHAPTER 16

- Added a section on online interviews.
- Updated the section on interview attire.

Features

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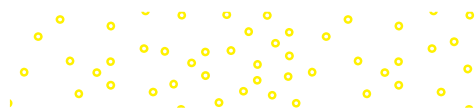
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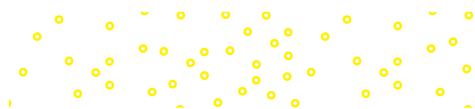
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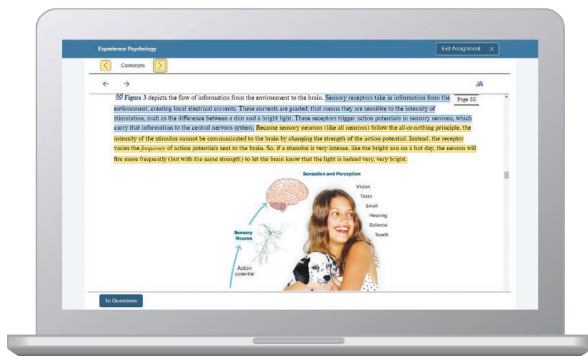
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Acknowledgments

This 13th edition, like each before, builds upon the ideas and advice of many instructors, students, and researchers. We would like to thank the following people who reviewed the 12th edition and suggested changes, many of which we incorporated into the 13th edition:

Brock Adams, *Weber State University*
Kathryn Archard, *University of Massachusetts-Boston*
Gretchen M. Arthur, *Lansing Community College*
Samuel Ascoli, *Iowa State University*
William Carland Caldwell Beckham, *Horry-Georgetown Technical College*
Lisa Branham, *Greenville Technical College*
Chloe Clark, *Iowa State University*
Christina Force, *Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania*

Stephen David Grover, *Park University*
Albert Haley, *Abilene Christian University*
David Jalajas, *Long Island University*
Eduardo Landeros, *San Diego Mesa College*
Molly Mayer, *University of Cincinnati*
Natalie Meyer, *Iowa State University*
Smita Jain Oxford, *University of Mary Washington*
Joseph Evan Ray, *University of Nevada-Reno*
Jacqueline Staley, *Yakima Valley College*

We also would like to thank the following instructors who contributed to the development of the previous editions:

Matt Alberhasky, *Des Moines Area Community College and Iowa State University*
Mark Alexander, *Indiana Wesleyan University*
Bill Allen, *University of LaVerne*
Vanessa Arnold, *University of Mississippi*
Eve Ash, *Oklahoma State University-Tulsa*
Lynn Ashford, *Alabama State University*
Tracy Austin, *Sam Houston State University*
Monique Babin, *Clackamas Community College*
Jean Baird, *Brigham Young University-Idaho*
Lenette Baker, *Valencia Community College*
Dennis Barbour, *Purdue University-Calumet*
Laura Barelman, *Wayne State College*
Fiona Barnes, *University of Florida*

Jan Barton-Zimmerman, *University of Nebraska-Kearney*
Jaye Bausser, *Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne*
Sallye Benoit, *Nicholls State University*
Michael Benton, *Bluegrass Community and Technology College*
Raymond W. Beswick, *formerly of Synerude, Ltd.*
Carole Bhakar, *The University of Manitoba*
Cathie Bishop, *Parkland College*
Randi Meryl Blank, *Indiana University*
Sarah Bleakney, *Georgia Institute of Technology*
Yvonne Block, *College of Lake County*
Bennis Blue, *Virginia State University*
John Boehm, *Iowa State University*
Maureen S. Bogdanowicz, *Kapi'olani Community College*
Kendra S. Boggess, *Concord College*

- Melanie Bookout, *Greenville Technical College*
- Christy Ann Borack, *California State University-Fullerton; Orange Coast College-Costa Mesa*
- Mary Young Bowers, *Northern Arizona University*
- Charles P. Bretan, *Northwood University*
- Paula Brown, *Northern Illinois University*
- Vincent Brown, *Battelle Memorial Institute*
- William Brunkan, *Augustana College*
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- W. Clark Ford, *Middle Tennessee State University*
- Louisa Fordyce, *Westmoreland County Community College*

- Paula J. Foster, *Foster Communication*
 Mildred Franceschi, *Valencia Community College-West Camp*
 Linda Fraser, *California State University-Fullerton*
 Silvia Fuduric, *Wayne State University*
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 Carole A. Holden, *County College of Morris*
 Carlton Holte, *California State University-Sacramento*
 Cynthia Houlden, *University of Nebraska-Kearney*
 Glenda Hudson, *California State University-Bakersfield*
 Elizabeth Huettman, *Cornell University*
 Melissa Ianetta, *University of Southern Indiana*
 Susan Isaacs, *Community College of Philadelphia*
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 Newton Lassiter, *Florida Atlantic University*

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 Kathy Lewis-Adler, *University of North Alabama*
 Luchen Li, *Iowa State University*
 Barbara Limbach, *Chadron State College*
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 Bobbi Looney, *Black Hills State University*
 Joyce Lopez, *Missouri State University*
 Andrea A. Lunsford, *Stanford University*
 Catherine MacDermott, *Saint Edwards University*
 Elizabeth Macdonald, *Thunderbird Graduate School of International Management*
 John T. Maguire, *University of Illinois*
 Michael D. Mahler, *Montana State University*
 Margaret Mahoney, *Iowa State University*
 Pamela L. Martin, *The Ohio State University*
 Iris Washburn Mauney, *High Point College*
 Robin McCarter, *North Greenville University*
 Patricia McClure, *West Virginia State College*
 Lynn McCool, *Drake University*
 Kelly McCormick-Sullivan, *Saint John Fisher College*
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 Carol Meyer, *American Public University*
 Julia R. Meyers, *North Carolina State University*
 Jack Miao, *Southern Methodist University*
 Julianne Michalenko, *Robert Morris University*
 Paul Miller, *Davidson College*
 Danielle Mitchell, *Pennsylvania State University-Fayette*
 Karl Mitchell, *Queens College-CUNY*
 Mialisa Moline, *University of Wisconsin-River Falls*
 Jayne Moneysmith, *Kent State University-Stark*
 Josef Moorehead, *California State University-Sacramento*
 Gregory Morin, *University of Nebraska-Omaha*
 Evelyn Morris, *Mesa Community College*
 Rodger Glenn Morrison, *Troy University*
 Frederick K. Moss, *University of Wisconsin-Waukesha*
 Andrea Muldoon, *University of Wisconsin-Stout*
 Anne Nail, *Amarillo College*
 Frank P. Nemecek Jr., *Wayne State University*
 Cheryl Noll, *Eastern Illinois University*
 Nancy Nygaard, *University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*
 Tanya Patrick, *Clackamas Community College*
 Greg Pauley, *Moberly Area Community College*
 Jean E. Perry, *University of Southern California*
 Linda N. Peters, *University of West Florida*
 Florence M. Petrofes, *University of Texas-El Paso*
 Melinda Phillabaum, *IUPUI*
 Evelyn M. Pierce, *Carnegie Mellon University*
 Allison Piper-Geber, *Miller, Hall & Triggs*
 Cathy Pleska, *West Virginia State College*

- Susan Plutsky, *California State University-Northridge*
 Virginia Polanski, *Stonehill College*
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 Judith A. Swartley, *Lehigh University*
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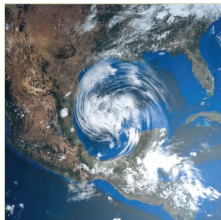
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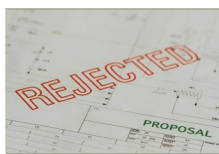
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Thirteenth Edition

Business Communication



CHAPTER

1

Succeeding in Business Communication

Chapter Outline

The Benefits of Good Communication Skills

The Need for Good Communication Skills

The Costs of Poor Communication

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

Communicating on the Job

Basic Criteria for Effective Messages

Questions for Analyzing a Business Communication Situation

- 1. What Is Your Purpose in Communicating?
- 2. Who Is Your Audience?
- 3. How Will the Audience Initially React to the Message?
- 4. What Information Must Your Message Include?
- 5. What Benefits Will Your Audience Find Convincing?
- 6. How Can You Ensure That You Communicate Ethically?

Summary by Learning Objectives



NEWSWORTHY COMMUNICATION

Costly Communications: Wells Fargo's Second Mistake



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Poorly done business communications can have severe consequences, as Wells Fargo learned in the wake of its 2016 fraud scandal. The second-largest bank in the U.S., Wells Fargo had pressured employees at local branches to meet quotas that led the employees to order debit cards and create fake checking and savings accounts in customers' names—all without the customers' consent. Clients noticed the new accounts as fees appeared on their bank statements. For its illegal actions, Wells Fargo was fined \$185 million by regulatory bodies such as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Testifying before Congress after the story broke in 2016, then-CEO and President John Stumpf seemed to blame 5,300 low-level employees—employees who were then fired. In addition, he failed to concede the corporate policies—the unattainable quotas—that had pushed employees toward unethical and illegal behavior. In initial public statements, Wells Fargo expressed only “regret” for what it had done. It took weeks for the company to apologize.

In 2020, Wells Fargo agreed to a \$3 billion settlement of criminal and civil charges. Its reputation remains marred.¹ Poor business practices started

the bank's problems; poor business communication compounded them.

Business communication takes many forms: face-to-face, phone, or online conversations, presentations, emails, text messages, reports, blogs, tweets, social media posts, and websites. All of these methods typically use **verbal communication**, or communication that uses words. **Nonverbal communication** does not use words. Photographs, graphs, and company logos are nonverbal. Nonverbal interpersonal communication includes how and where people sit at meetings, how people use gestures, how they organize office spaces, and how long they keep a visitor waiting.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

- LO 1-1** Describe the benefits of good communication.
- LO 1-2** Explain why you need to be able to communicate well.
- LO 1-3** Describe the costs of poor communication.
- LO 1-4** Describe what communication on the job can look like.
- LO 1-5** Explain the basic criteria for effective messages.
- LO 1-6** Analyze a business communication situation.

The Benefits of Good Communication Skills

LO 1-1

Good communication—whether verbal or nonverbal—is worth every minute it takes and every penny it costs. Companies that communicate effectively with their employees enjoy, for example, lower turnover rates.²

Good communication skills also will benefit you, even in your first job. You may have wonderful ideas for your workplace, but unless you can communicate them to the relevant people, they will get you nowhere. You must understand how to persuade, to explain complex material, and to adapt information to particular audiences. No software program will replace these skills. Even in your first job, you'll communicate. As a result, communication ability consistently ranks first among the qualities that employers look for in college graduates.³

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.⁴ In fact, 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 bottom 20%.⁵

The Need for Good Communication Skills

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.⁶ 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.”⁷

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. Administrative assistants perform 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.⁸

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 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.

The Costs of Poor Communication

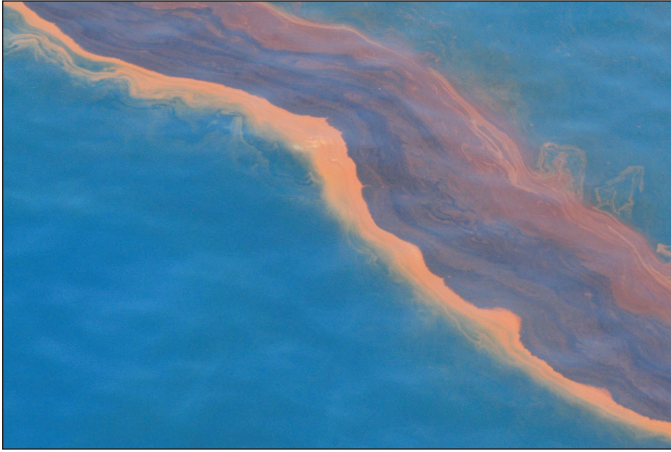
LO 1-3

Poor communication can cost billions of dollars. For example, according to the presidential commission, inadequate communication among British Petroleum (BP), 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.⁹ BP 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.

Costs of poor communication are not just financial. People died in the explosion of BP’s oil well. 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.



British Petroleum spilled oil into the Gulf of Mexico for 87 days. The explosion that caused the spill killed 11 people and injured 17 others.

NOAA

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

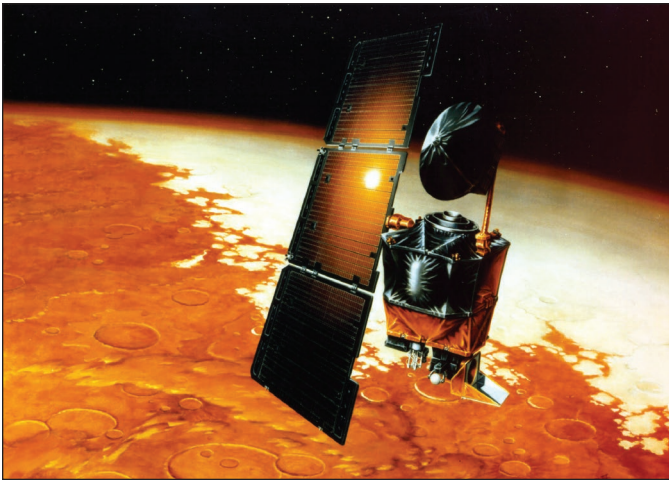
Ineffective messages don't get results. A receiver who has to guess what the sender means may guess wrong. A reader who finds a letter or email unconvincing or insulting simply won't do what the message asks.

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.¹⁰

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.



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.

NASA

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.¹¹ 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.¹²

Individual communications also can have legal consequences. For example, 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.

In particular, communications such as emails and text 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 the organization's employees. 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.

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?

Communicating on the Job

LO 1-4

Communication—verbal and nonverbal, spoken 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: (1) to inform, (2) to request or persuade, and (3) to build 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.

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

Basic Criteria for Effective Messages

LO 1-5

Good business communication meets seven basic criteria.

- **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. Often, you'll need to revise entire paragraphs to phrase your ideas more clearly and to incorporate more accurate or more precise words.
- **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 follows conventions.** **Conventions** are widely accepted practices that help people recognize, produce, and interpret different kinds of communications. The key to using conventions effectively 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.
- **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.
- **It builds goodwill.** The message presents a positive image of the communicator and their organization. It treats the message recipient as a person, not a number. It cements a good relationship between the communicator and the audience.
- **It's ethical.** Ethical communication enacts certain values; for example, it is responsible, careful, truthful, and relevant.

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

Questions for Analyzing a Business Communication Situation

LO 1-6

When you're faced with the need to communicate, you need to analyze the **rhetorical situation**. You can ask the questions posed in this section in order to analyze any communication situation that you encounter.

1. What Is Your Purpose 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.

When you convey information to which the audience's basic reaction will be neutral, the message is an **informative message**. If you convey information to which the audience's reaction will be positive, the message is a **positive or good-news message**. Unlike a **persuasive message**, neither informative nor positive messages ask the audience to do something. However, you will want the audience to take a positive attitude toward the information they are receiving, so in a sense, even an informative message has a persuasive element. Chapter 11 discusses persuasive messages—messages that aim to change beliefs or behavior. Chapter 10 discusses negative messages—messages that convey news the audience will not welcome. Chapter 9 covers positive and informative messages.

Keep in mind that many messages can be positive, informative, negative, or persuasive, depending on your purpose. A transmittal, for example, can be positive when you want to let your audience know about glowing sales figures; it can be persuasive when you want the audience to act on the information. A performance appraisal is positive when you evaluate someone who's doing superbly, negative when your purpose is to compile a record to justify firing someone, and persuasive when you want to motivate a satisfactory worker to continue to improve.

2. Who Is Your Audience?

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? 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.

Identifying Audiences The first step in analyzing your audience is to decide who your audience is. Organizational messages have multiple audiences:

1. A **gatekeeper** has the power to stop your message instead of sending it on to other audiences. The gatekeeper therefore controls whether your message even gets to the primary audience. Sometimes the supervisor who assigns the message is the gatekeeper; sometimes the gatekeeper is higher in the organization. In some cases, gatekeepers may exist outside the organization.
2. The **primary audience** decides whether to accept your recommendations or act on the basis of your message. You must reach the primary audience to fulfill your purposes in any message.
3. The **secondary audience** may be asked to comment on your message or to implement your ideas after they've been approved. Secondary audiences also include lawyers who may use your message—perhaps years later—as evidence of your organization's culture and practices.
4. An **auxiliary audience** may encounter your message but will not have to interact with it. This audience includes the “read-only” people.
5. A **watchdog audience**, though it does not have the power to stop the message and will not act directly on it, has political, social, or economic power. The watchdog pays close attention to the transaction between you and the primary audience and may base future actions on its evaluation of your message.

Figure 1.3	Strategies for Documents with Multiple Audiences
Content and number of details	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Provide an overview or executive summary for readers who want just the main points.■ In the body of the document, provide enough detail for the primary audience (i.e., decision makers) and for anyone else who could veto your proposal.■ If the primary audience doesn't need details that other audiences will want, provide those details in appendices.	
Organization	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Use headings and a table of contents so readers can turn to the portions that interest them.■ Organize your message based on the primary audience's attitude toward it.	
Level of formality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Avoid personal pronouns. The pronoun "you" ceases to have a specific meaning when several different audiences use a document.■ If both internal and external audiences will use a document, use a slightly more formal style than you would in an internal document.■ Use a more formal style when you write to international audiences.	
Technical level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ In the body of the document, assume the degree of knowledge of the primary audience.■ Put background and explanatory information under separate headings. Then readers can use the headings and the table of contents to read or skip these sections, as their knowledge dictates.■ If the primary audience has more knowledge than other audiences, provide a glossary of terms. Early in the document, let readers know that the glossary exists.	

Here's an example: Fernanda works in the information technology department of a large financial institution. She must write an email explaining a major software change. Her boss is the *gatekeeper*; the software users in various departments are the *primary audience*. The *secondary audience* includes the tech people who will be helping the primary audience install and adjust to the new software. The *auxiliary audience* includes department program assistants who forward the email to appropriate people in each department. A *watchdog audience* is the board of directors.

When it is not possible to meet everyone's needs, meet the needs of gatekeepers and decision makers first. Figure 1.3 offers strategies for creating documents for multiple audiences.

Although you will probably use different styles, and sometimes include different content, when communicating with multiple audiences, you need to keep your core message consistent. For example, engineers might need more technical information than managers, but the core messages that the two audiences receive should not be conflicting in any way.

Analyzing Members of Groups In many organizational situations, you'll analyze your audience not as individuals, but as members of a group. When creating your message, first determine the relationship between the audience and your organization, what separates them from the public: "taxpayers who must be notified that they owe more income tax," "customers who use our accounting services," or "employees with small children." Focus on what group members have in common. After determining the relationship between the audience and your organization, focus on what these audience members have in common.¹³ Although generalizations won't be true for all members of the group, generalization is necessary when you must appeal to a large group of people with one message. In some cases, no research is necessary: It's easy to guess the attitudes of people who must be told they owe more taxes. In other cases, databases may yield useful information. In still other cases, you may want to do original research.

Figure 1.4	Some Generational Differences in the Workplace			
	Baby boomers	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z
Birth dates	1946–1964	1965–1980	1980–1995	1996–2010
Attitude toward career	Loyal to employer	Loyal to profession	Digital entrepreneurs	Flexible, able to shift
Characteristics	Experimental, liberal, free-spirited	Ethical, independent, adaptable	Optimistic, adventurous, open-minded	Internet savvy, innovative, impatient
Preferred channels	Face-to-face, email	Texting, email	Texting, social media	Online face-to-face

Sources: "The Generation Guide—Millennials, Gen X, Y, Z and Baby Boomers," *FourHooks*, April 26, 2015, <http://fourhooks.com/marketing/the-generation-guide-millennials-gen-x-y-z-and-baby-boomers-art5910718593/>; and Jen Wieczner, "Are Generational Differences Impacting Your Business? Are You Communicating Effectively?" *My RIA Lawyer*, n.d., https://www.myrialawyer.com/generational-differences/?utm_medium=social&utm_source=linkedin.company&utm_campaign=postfit&utm_content=postfit71c.

Demographic Characteristics Databases enable you to map demographic and psychographic profiles of customers or employees. **Demographic characteristics** are measurable features that can be counted objectively, such as income, education level, geographic region, and age.

For most companies, income is a major demographic characteristic. In 2011, Walmart quietly returned to advertising its "everyday low prices" after experimenting with low-priced sale products balanced by slightly higher prices elsewhere. The new pricing had not appealed to Walmart's financially strapped customers. The chain also returned guns and fishing equipment to the shelves of many of its stores in an attempt to attract more men as customers.¹⁴

Location is yet another major demographic characteristic. You can probably think of many differences among regional audiences or between urban and rural audiences in the U.S. See Chapter 5 for more information on communicating across cultures.

Age certainly matters. One aspect of age that gets much press is the differences between generations in the office. Many older people believe younger workers have a sense of entitlement, that they expect great opportunities and perks without working for them. On the other hand, many younger workers see their older colleagues as rigid. Figure 1.4 shows some of the frequently mentioned differences among baby boomers, Gen Xers, millennials, and Gen Zers. While awareness of generational differences may help in some communication situations, such lists are also a good place to warn against stereotypes.

Psychographic Characteristics **Psychographic characteristics** include personalities, values, interests, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, goals, and lifestyles. Knowing what your audience finds important allows you to choose information that the audience will find persuasive.

Marketing companies obtain psychographic data from consumers' web surfing records, including use of social media, and personal offline data from sources such as the Census Bureau, consumer research firms such as Nielsen, credit card and shopping histories, and real estate and motor vehicle records. The combined data allow marketers to reach narrowly defined audiences.

3. How Will the Audience Initially React to the Message?

Will the Audience See This Message as Important? Audiences will read and act on messages they see as important, and they may ignore messages that seem unimportant to them. When the audience may see your message as unimportant, you need to (1) use a subject line or first paragraph that shows your reader this message is important and relevant, (2) make the action as easy as possible, (3) keep the message as short as possible, and (4) suggest a realistic deadline for action.

Is the Audience Opposed to Your Message? People who have already made up their minds are highly resistant to change. When the audience will oppose what you have to say, you need to start your message with any areas of common ground that you share with your audience and show that your solution is the best solution currently available, even though it isn't perfect. You might also limit your statement or request. If parts of your message could be delivered later, postpone them.

How Will the Fact That the Message Is From You Affect the Audience's Reaction? The audience's experience with you and your organization shapes the response to this new message. Someone who thinks well of you and your organization will be prepared to receive your message favorably; someone who thinks poorly of you and the organization will be quick to find fault with what you say and the way you say it. When your audience has negative feelings about your organization, your position, or you personally, you need to use positive emphasis (see Chapter 2) to counteract the natural tendency to sound defensive.

4. What Information Must Your Message Include?

Make a list of all the points that you must include; 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.

How Much Does the Audience Already Know about This Subject?

It's easy to overestimate the knowledge an audience has. People outside your own immediate unit may not really know what it is you do. Even people who once worked in your unit may have forgotten specific details now that their daily work is in management. People outside your organization won't know how *your* organization does things.

Does the Audience's Knowledge Need to Be Updated or Corrected?

Our personal experience guides our expectations and actions, but sometimes it needs to be corrected. If you're trying to change someone's understanding of something, you need to acknowledge the audience's initial understanding early in the message; use examples, statistics, or other evidence to show the need for the change; allow the audience to save face by suggesting that changed circumstances call for new attitudes or action.

How Much Detail Does the Audience Want? A message that does not give the audience the desired amount or kind of detail may fail. Sometimes you can ask your audience how much detail they want. When you write to people you do not know well, you can provide all the detail needed to understand and act on your message. You should group chunks of information under headings so that readers can go directly to the parts of the message they find most interesting and relevant.

Always provide enough detail to be vivid and concrete, especially when you are proposing an idea that the audience may not have thought of before or that will take some time to pay off.

Are There Hot Buttons or "Red Flag" Words That May Create an Immediate Negative Response? You don't have time to convince the audience that a term is broader or more neutral than their understanding. When you need agreement or approval, you should avoid terms that carry emotional charges for many people, such as *criminal* and *fundamentalist*.

5. What Benefits Will Your Audience Find Convincing?

Use your analysis of your audience to create effective **audience benefits**, advantages that the audience gets by using your services, buying your products, following your policies, or adopting your ideas. In informative messages, benefits give reasons to comply with

the information you announce and suggest that the information is good. In persuasive messages, benefits give reasons to act and help overcome audience resistance. Negative messages do not use benefits.

Good benefits meet five criteria. Each of these criteria suggests a technique for writing good benefits.

Adapt Benefits to the Audience When you write to different audiences, you may need to stress different benefits. Suppose that you want to persuade people to come to the restaurant you manage. It's true that everybody needs to eat, but telling people they can satisfy their hunger needs won't persuade them to come to your restaurant rather than going somewhere else or eating at home. Depending on what features your restaurant offered, you could appeal to one or more of the following subgroups:

Subgroup	Features to meet the subgroup's needs
People who work outside the home	A quick lunch; a relaxing place to take clients or colleagues
Parents with small children	High chairs, children's menus, and toys to keep the kids entertained while they wait for their order
People who eat out a lot	Variety both in food and in decor
People on tight budgets	Economical food; a place where they don't need to tip (cafeteria or fast food)
People on special diets	Low-sodium and low-carb dishes; vegetarian food; kosher or halal food
People to whom eating out is part of an evening's entertainment	Music or a floor show; elegant surroundings; reservations so they can get to a show or event after dinner; late hours so they can come to dinner after a show or game

Stress Intrinsic as Well as Extrinsic Motivators Intrinsic motivators come automatically from using a product or doing something. Extrinsic motivators are "added on." Someone in power decides to give them; they do not necessarily come from using the product or doing the action. Figure 1.5 gives examples of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators for three activities.

Intrinsic motivators or benefits are better than extrinsic motivators; there just aren't enough extrinsic motivators for everything you want people to do. You can't give a prize to every customer every time they place an order or to every subordinate who does what they are supposed to do. In addition, research shows that extrinsic motivators actually may make people *less* satisfied with the products they buy or the procedures they follow.

Figure 1.5 Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivators		
Activity	Extrinsic motivator	Intrinsic motivator
Making a sale	Getting a commission	Pleasure in convincing someone; pride in using your talents to think of a strategy and execute it
Turning in a suggestion to a company suggestion system	Getting a monetary reward when the suggestion is implemented	Solving a problem at work; making the work environment a little more pleasant
Writing a report that solves an organizational problem	Getting praise, a good performance appraisal, and maybe a raise	Pleasure in having an effect on an organization; pride in using your skills to solve problems; solving the problem itself

Prove Benefits with Clear Logic and Explain Them in Adequate Detail

An audience benefit is a claim or assertion that the audience will benefit if they do something. Convincing the audience, therefore, involves two steps: making sure the benefit really will occur and explaining it to the audience.

If the logic behind a claimed benefit is faulty or inaccurate, there's no way to make that particular benefit convincing. Revise the benefit to make it logical.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Faulty logic: | Moving your account information into Excel will save you time. |
| Analysis: | If you have not used Excel before, in the short run it will probably take you longer to work with your account information using Excel. You may have been pretty good with your old system! |
| Revised benefit: | Moving your account information into Excel will allow you to prepare your monthly budget pages with a few clicks of a button. |

Overcome Potential Obstacles Everyone has a set of ideas and habits and a mental self-image. If we're asked to do something that seems to violate any of those, we first have to be persuaded to change our attitudes or habits or self-image—a change we're reluctant to make. In these cases, show that what you ask is consistent with some aspect of what the audience believes.

When your request is time-consuming, complicated, or physically or psychologically difficult, you need to show how the audience (not just you or your organization) will benefit when the action is completed. You should also make the action as easy as possible. For complex procedures, create a list of actions so that the audience can check off each step when it's done.

Phrase Benefits in You-Attitude If benefits aren't worded with *you*-attitude (see Chapter 2), they'll sound selfish and won't be as effective as they could be. It doesn't matter how you phrase benefits while you're brainstorming and developing them, but in your final draft, check to be sure that you've used *you*-attitude.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Lacks <i>you</i> -attitude: | We have the lowest prices in town. |
| <i>You</i> -attitude: | At Havlichek Cars, you get the best deal in town. |

Using *you*-attitude also means showing how your organization's policy or product meets the audience's needs. Link features to audience needs and provide details that make the benefit vivid.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Weak: | You get quick service. |
| Better: | If you only have an hour for lunch, try our Business Buffet. Within minutes, you can choose from a variety of main dishes, vegetables, and a make-your-own-sandwich-and-salad bar. You'll have a lunch that's as light or filling as you want, with time to enjoy it—and still be back to the office on time. |

6. How Can You Ensure That You Communicate Ethically?

Business communication occurs at multiple levels: between coworkers, between organizations, and between organizations and the communities in which they operate. Throughout these levels, ethical business communication begins with telling the truth.

The National Communication Association developed a "Credo for Ethical Communication." In the credo, the NCA focuses on concrete actions as opposed to abstract philosophies. Besides calling for truthfulness, it advocates diversity of perspective, reason, and respect in communication practices.

Figure 1.6 elaborates on ethical components of communication. As it suggests, language, graphics, and document design—basic parts of any business document—can be

Figure 1.6 Ethical Issues in Business Communications

Manner of conveying the message	Qualities of the message
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the language clear to the audience? Does it respect the audience? Do the words balance the organization's right to present its best case with its responsibility to present its message honestly? Do graphics help the audience understand? Or are graphics used to distract or confuse? Does the design of the document make reading easy? Does document design attempt to make readers skip key points? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the message honest and sensitive to all stakeholders? Have interested parties been able to provide input? Does the audience get all the information it needs to make a good decision, or is information withheld? Is information communicated so the audience can grasp it or are data "dumped" without any context? Are the arguments logical? Are they supported with adequate evidence? Are the emotional appeals used fairly? Do they supplement logic rather than substitute for it? Does the organizational pattern lead the audience without undue manipulation? Does the message use good sources? Are the sources used honestly? Are they documented?

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.

Summary by Learning Objectives

LO 1-1 Describe the benefits of good communication.

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 Explain why you need to be able to communicate well.

- The three basic purposes of business 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 Describe the costs of poor communication.

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

LO 1-4 Describe what communication on the job can look like.

- Communication goes to both internal and external audiences.
- People in organizations produce a large variety of documents.

LO 1-5 Explain the basic criteria for effective messages.

Good business writing meets seven basic criteria: it's clear, complete, and correct; it follows conventions; it saves the reader's time; it builds goodwill; and it's ethical.

LO 1-6 Analyze a business communication situation.

- What is your purpose in communicating?
- Who is your audience?
- How will the audience initially react to the message?
- What information must your message include?
- What benefits will your audience find convincing?
- How can you ensure that you communicate ethically?

Exercises and Cases

1.1 Reviewing the Chapter

Why do you and your business need to be able to communicate well? (LO 1-1)

What are some flawed assumptions about workplace communication? What is the reality for each myth? (LO 1-2)

What are the costs of poor communication? (LO 1-3)

What is the difference between internal and external audiences? (LO 1-4)

What are the basic criteria for effective messages? (LO 1-5)

What are the questions for analyzing a business communication situation? (LO 1-6)

Who are the five different audiences your message may need to address? (LO 1-6)

What are five characteristics of good audience benefits? (LO 1-6)

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. Destiny 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 Destiny,

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.

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 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.

1.6 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. Inflating your evaluation of a subordinate because you know that only people ranked *excellent* will get pay raises.
2. Updating your Facebook page and visiting the pages of friends during business hours.
3. Writing a feasibility report about a new product and de-emphasizing test results that show it could cause cancer.
4. Designing an ad campaign for a cigarette brand.
5. 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.
6. Laughing at the racist or sexist jokes a client makes, even though you find them offensive.

1.7 Identifying Audiences

In each of the following situations, label the audiences as gatekeeper, primary, secondary, auxiliary, or watchdog audiences (all audiences may not be in each scenario) and explain your reasoning:

1. Kent, Carol, and Jose are planning to start a website design business. However, before they can get started, they need money. They have developed a business plan and are getting ready to seek funds from financial institutions for starting their small business.
2. Quinn’s boss asked them to write a direct-mail letter to potential customers about the advantages of becoming a preferred member of their agency’s travel club. The letter will go to all customers of the agency who are more than 65 years old.
3. Paul works for the mayor’s office in a big city. As part of a citywide cost-cutting measure, a blue-ribbon panel has recommended requiring employees who work more than 40 hours in a week to take compensatory time off rather than being paid overtime. The only exceptions will be the police and fire departments. The mayor asks Paul to prepare a proposal for the city council, which will vote on whether to implement the change. Before they vote, council members will hear from (1) citizens, who will have an opportunity to read the proposal and communicate their opinions to the city council; (2) mayors’ offices in other cities, who may be asked about their experiences; (3) union representatives, who may be concerned about the reduction in income that will occur if the proposal is implemented; (4) department heads, whose ability to schedule work might be limited if the proposal passes; and (5) the blue-ribbon panel and good-government lobbying groups. Council members come up for reelection in six months.
4. Sharon, Steven’s boss at Bigster Corporation, has asked him to write an email for everyone in her division, informing them of HR’s new mandatory training sessions on new government regulations affecting Bigster’s services.

1.8 Analyzing Multiple Audiences

Like most major corporations, the U.S. Census Bureau has multiple, conflicting audiences, among them the president,

Congress, press, state governments, citizens (both as providers and users of data), statisticians, and researchers.

- For the bureau, who might serve as gatekeeper, primary, secondary, auxiliary, and watchdog audiences?
- What kinds of conflicting goals might these audiences have?
- What would be appropriate benefits for each type of audience?
- What kinds of categories might the bureau create for its largest audience (citizens)?

1.9 Identifying and Developing Audience Benefits

Listed here are several things an organization might like its employees to do:

1. Write fewer emails.
2. Volunteer at a local food pantry.
3. Volunteer to recruit interns at a job fair.
4. Attend team-building activities every other Friday afternoon.
5. Attend HR seminars on health policy changes.

As your instructor directs,

- a. Identify the motives or needs that might be met by each of the activities.
- b. Develop each need or motive as an audience benefit in a full paragraph. Use additional paragraphs for the other needs met by the activity. Remember to use *you*-attitude.

1.10 Identifying Objections and Audience Benefits

Think of an organization you know something about and answer the following questions for it:

1. Your organization is thinking about developing a knowledge management system that requires workers to input their knowledge and experience in their job functions into the organizational database. What benefits could the knowledge management system offer your organization? What drawbacks are there? Who would be the easiest to convince? Who would be the hardest?
2. New telephone software would efficiently replace your organization's long-standing human phone operator, who has been a perennial welcoming voice to incoming callers. What objections might people in your organization have to replacing the operator? What benefits might your organization receive? Who would be easiest to convince? Who would be the hardest?

3. Your organization is thinking of outsourcing one of its primary products to a manufacturer in another country where the product can be made more cost-efficiently. What fears or objections might people have? What benefits might your organization receive? Who would be easiest to convince? Who would be hardest?

As your instructor directs,

- a. Share your answers orally with a small group of students.
- b. Present your answers in an oral presentation to the class.
- c. Write a paragraph developing the best audience benefit you identified. Remember to use *you*-attitude.

1.11 Analyzing Benefits for Multiple Audiences

The U.S. Census Bureau lists these benefits from cooperating with the census:

1. "Census information affects the numbers of seats your state occupies in the U.S. House of Representatives. And people from many walks of life use census data to advocate for causes, rescue disaster victims, prevent diseases, research markets, locate pools of skilled workers and more.

"When you do the math, it's easy to see what an accurate count of residents can do for your community. Better infrastructure. More services. A brighter tomorrow for everyone. In fact, the information the census collects helps to determine how more than \$400 billion of federal funding each year is spent on infrastructure and services like:
 - Hospitals
 - Job-training centers
 - Schools
 - Senior centers
 - Bridges, tunnels and other public works projects
 - Emergency services"¹⁵

How well do these benefits meet the characteristics of good audience benefits discussed in this chapter?

1.12 Banking on Multiple Audiences

Bruce Murphy, an executive at KeyBank, tackled a new problem: how to extend banking services to a new audience—people who use banks intermittently or not at all. It is a large group, estimated at 73 million people. Together, they spend an estimated \$11 billion in fees at places such as check-cashing outlets, money-wire companies, and paycheck lenders (companies offering cash advances on future paychecks).

However, they are a tough audience. Many of them have a deep distrust of banks or believe banks will not serve them. Murphy also faced another tough audience: bank managers who feared attracting forgeries and other bad checks and thus losing money. One manager actually said, “Are you crazy? These are the very people we’re trying to keep out of the bank!”

To attract the new customers, KeyBank cashes payroll and government checks for a 1.5% fee, well below the 2.44% average

for check-cashing outlets. The bank also started offering free financial education classes. In fact, the bank even has a program to help people with a history of bounced checks to clear their records by paying restitution and taking the financial education class.

The program is growing, among both check-cashing clients and branches offering the services, to the satisfaction of both audiences.¹⁶

- What are some other businesses that could expand services to underserved populations?
- What services would they offer?
- What problems would they encounter?
- What audience appeals could they use to attract clients or customers?

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CHAPTER

2

Using Goodwill for Effective Communication

Chapter Outline

Choosing the Appropriate Channel to Reach Your Audience

- Benefits of Appropriate Communication Channels
- Common Communication Channels for Sharing Messages

You-Attitude

- Create *You-Attitude* at the Sentence Level
- Create *You-Attitude* beyond the Sentence Level
- Be Aware of Cultural Differences
- Build Trust

Positive Emphasis

- How to Create Positive Emphasis
- How to Check Positive Emphasis

Tone

- Use Courtesy Titles for People You Don't Know Well
- Be Aware of the Power Implications of Word Choice

Creating Inclusivity

- Making Language Nongendered
- Making Language Nonracist and Nonageist
- Referring to People with Disabilities and Diseases
- Choosing Inclusive Visuals

Platform-Specific Best Practices for Creating Goodwill

- Phone Calls
- Email
- Social Media

Summary by Learning Objectives

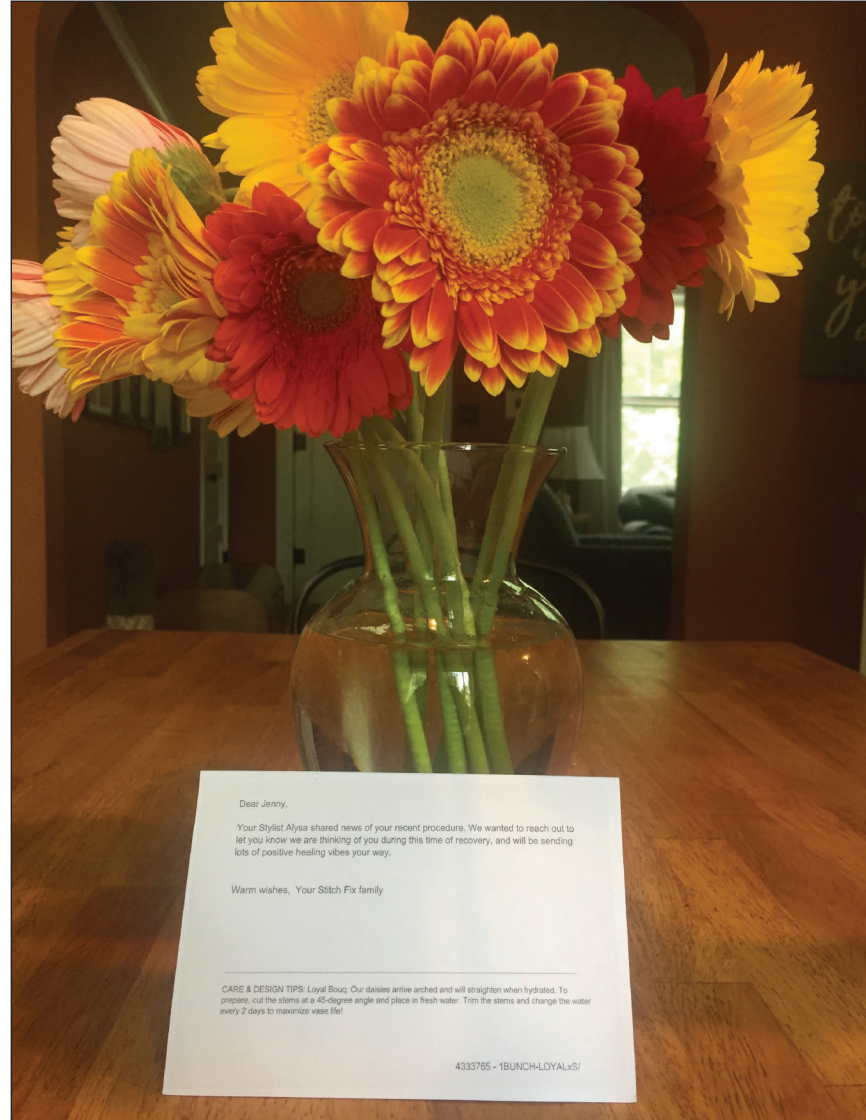


Stitch Fix: Showing Customers that They Care

Reliability, convenience, and customer service are paramount features of goodwill—or the relationship that companies develop with their audience. That relationship is essential when 79% of 18- to 65-year-old consumers in the U.S. say that, before they buy anything, they want to see that companies care about their customers. Few businesses can compete with the level of caring that StitchFix offers its customers.

StitchFix is an online personal-styling service that uses data analytics and AI combined with the expertise of human stylists and customer feedback to send millions of clothing items to customers each year. StitchFix uses a wide variety of data—including customers' ratings of clothing items in the StitchFix app—and runs them through algorithms to narrow available clothing items into smaller pools of potential clothing choices. Customers choose how often to receive a "fix," a selection of five items, and the delivery date of the fix. They are also encouraged to provide a note of request for the upcoming fix. While data analytics may start the fix, a human touch completes it. Each fix comes with a personal note from a human stylist that speaks directly to the customer's request, as well as suggestions for how to wear and combine the items. Customers review each fix item on several criteria to help create a better fix the next time.

StitchFix's success is due to customers' willingness to trust the company to make personal clothing choices and the company's ability to make customers feel



Jeanine E Aune

heard throughout the process, including when things do not go right. That communication comes through many channels, some of them surprising. When one of the authors of this book was

preparing to undergo a mastectomy, she requested tops that would be easy to wear during recovery. Not only did the company send five tops as requested, it also sent flowers and a note.

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Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

- LO 2-1** Select an appropriate channel for your message.
- LO 2-2** Create *you*-attitude.
- LO 2-3** Create positive emphasis.
- LO 2-4** Improve tone in business communication.
- LO 2-5** Create inclusive business communication.
- LO 2-6** Employ platform-specific best practices for creating goodwill.

Choosing the Appropriate Channel to Reach Your Audience

LO 2-1

Goodwill makes people feel positively toward you and the organization that you work for, helps build the relationships that increase customer loyalty, and eases the challenges of business and administration. Companies have long been aware that treating customers well pays off in more sales and higher profits. Today we work in a service economy: the majority of jobs are in service, where goodwill is even more important.¹

The importance of building goodwill with audiences outside your organization is perhaps obvious, but goodwill is also important in your internal communications. More and more organizations are realizing that treating employees well is both financially wise and ethically sound. Happy employees result in less staff turnover, which reduces hiring and training costs, and greater willingness to help the organization succeed. Research indicates prioritizing employee satisfaction can lead to a 6.6% increase in productivity per hour.² In 2015, Dan Price, CEO of Gravity Payments, a credit card processing company, made headlines for raising the minimum wage at his business to \$70,000, while taking a salary cut to fund the increase. This increase in worker salary directly led to an increase in retention and worker happiness rates, as well as a boost in sales, nearly double profits in 2016,³ and a reported 80% increase in customers by 2018.⁴ More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the company hard, but Price met with all of his employees to explain the dire situation, and almost every employee agreed to a voluntary, temporary pay cut in order to avoid layoffs.⁵

Choosing the appropriate communication channel and using *you*-attitude, positive emphasis, appropriate tone, and bias-free language are all ways that you can build goodwill in your business communications. All of these practices will help you achieve your purposes and make your messages friendlier, more persuasive, more professional, and more compassionate. They suggest that you care not just about money, but also about the needs and interests of your customers, employees, and fellow citizens.

A communication **channel** is the means by which you convey your message. Today's communication offers myriad choices when it comes to media; whether letter, email, podcast, tweet, Instagram, TikTok, or some other option, each method of communicating carries distinct advantages and disadvantages. You should select an appropriate channel in order to optimize your communication.

Evolving channels can have enormous impacts on businesses, and depending on the rhetorical situation, including your audience and purpose, one channel may be better than another. For example, Normans Bridal Shoppe in Springfield, Missouri, reaches its teenage market for prom dresses by showcasing available dresses in upbeat TikTok videos.⁶ Ad money has been moving out of print and TV channels and into social media advertising, which had a budget of over \$40 billion in 2020.⁷

Businesses use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr to highlight new products and services. Many companies have interactive websites and forums where customers can get product information and chat about products; Amazon is a prime example. Manufacturers give perks to bloggers to talk about their products. Nonprofits advertise events, connect with volunteers, and schedule volunteer service on their Instagram accounts and Facebook pages. And all that social network communication now can be mined by software that performs **semantic analyses**, providing feedback to advertisers about both products and audiences.

Choosing the right channel can be tricky sometimes. As Hurricane Katrina approached the Gulf Coast, the National Hurricane Center found its electronic communications about the looming wallop were not enough; officials at the Center determined that they should phone Gulf Coast mayors and governors to hasten their disaster preparations.⁸ Even in the office, you will have to decide if your message will be more effective as an email, text message, phone call, visit, or even sticky note posted on a colleague's computer.

In general, a written message makes it easier to

- Present extensive or complex data.
- Present many specific details.
- Minimize undesirable emotions.
- Track details and agreements.

Oral and visual messages make it easier to

- Use emotion to help persuade the audience.
- Focus the audience's attention on specific points.
- Resolve conflicts and build consensus.
- Modify plans.
- Get immediate action or response.

Benefits of Appropriate Communication Channels

Using a well-chosen channel to share messages will help you meet audience expectations, reach your target audience, shorten response time, and make a broader impact.

Meet Audience Expectations Audiences expect certain messages to be conveyed certain ways—in other words, messages should adhere to delivery-method conventions. Conventions change as technology changes, but audiences expect businesses to keep up. Years ago, it was standard to receive medical test results in a doctor's-office consultation; today, you can log in to your hospital's website and download data from yesterday's blood draw. If a hospital fails to develop the website that stores and delivers test results electronically, it will lose credibility and, possibly, patients because it does not meet current expectations for how to deliver information.

Reach a More Targeted Audience Using appropriate technology improves business because it affords a more targeted reach to potential customers. Using the appropriate channel also helps in nonbusiness endeavors. For example, an animal shelter uses Facebook to post videos of pets available for adoption.⁹ By showcasing the pets' charming qualities to a wide range of viewers—in a format that allows easy sharing with others—the animal shelter can reach potential adopters more quickly and effectively.

Shorten Response Time The appropriate channel allows communicators to respond more quickly. Letters used to take weeks to arrive; now emails are sent and received nearly instantaneously. In a hospital, patients order meals and receive their made-to-order tray 22 minutes later.¹⁰ Coworkers may text each other or send an instant message and expect a response within minutes. Although the increased expectations of shortened response times for many technological channels may burden today's employees, the sheer variety of available channels allows for improved service and, in some cases (as in the chapter-opening StitchFix case), stronger customer-company relationships.

Make a Broader Impact As seen in the StitchFix case, companies and individuals can use a communication channel to do more than improve their bottom line. Companies can retweet support of social-justice causes, email their employees about a company drop-off site for donations to a local charity, or post a video to their Facebook page sharing a list of workplace healthy behaviors, such as taking a brisk walk between tasks. A variety of communication channels allows for an array of opportunities for engagement with a broad range of audiences; it enables a positive impact beyond the realm of business.

Common Communication Channels for Sharing Messages

The best approach for your business depends on its size, purposes, circumstances, needs, and budget.

Face-to-Face Conversations In the office, much communication is most effectively done face-to-face, and some businesses are encouraging their employees to write fewer emails and visit each other's desks more often. They believe such visits contribute to a friendlier, more collaborative work environment. Research with tracking sensors shows they are right; the most productive workers have the most face-to-face contacts.¹¹ Face-to-face visits are a good choice when

- You know a colleague welcomes your visits.
- You are building a business relationship with a person.
- A real-time connection saves messages (e.g., setting a meeting agenda).
- Your business requires dialogue or negotiation.
- You need something immediately (such as a signature).
- Discretion is vital, and you do not want to leave a paper trail.
- The situation is complex enough that you want as many visual and aural cues as possible.

Use these tips for effective face-to-face contact:

- Ensure the timing is convenient for the recipient and ask permission to pop in (e.g., "Excuse me, but do you have a moment to talk?")
- If you are discussing something complex, have appropriate documents in hand.
- Don't take over the other person's space. Don't place your papers on top of their desk or table without permission. Don't lean over them or their desk.
- Look for "time to go" signs. Some people have a limited tolerance for small talk, especially when they are hard at work on a task.

Phone Calls Phone calls serve an important role in business communication, whether within a business or between business and customer.¹² The phone call medium demands immediacy, which can help clarify misunderstandings, address urgent needs, or make decisions in the moment. Phone calls also allow for a layer of nonverbal communication that texting does not, such as nuances of the voice like inflection, pace, and volume. Even voicemail captures vocal communication that would be absent from a written message such as a text or email.

Letters A letter is a short document that uses a block, modified, or simplified letter format that goes to readers outside your organization. (See Appendix A for examples.) There are many common purposes for letters: job applications, recommendations, job offer letters, resignations, commendations, policy changes, notifications, and more. Letters are useful communication tools when you want your audience to have information

that they can refer to keep permanently without access to technology. In addition, a well-written letter offers a personal touch, which creates goodwill with your audience.

Websites Most customers expect to find information online about a company, such as business hours, services offered, and contact information. To control the information its customers find online, and to control the company's narrative, a company needs a website—if not a standalone website with a private domain name, such as <http://www.joaniescupcakes.com>, then at least a social media-hosted site, such as a business Facebook page. Without an online presence, a company risks appearing out of touch, incompetent, or not audience-focused, and it loses control of its image to online reviews.

Email Using email to send messages saves companies time and money because it eliminates printing and postage costs. It also conveys messages more quickly than printed messages. Most companies rely on intracompany email as the primary form of communication among employees, and many companies connect with customers via email lists. In communicating with customers, businesses use email to send order confirmations and tracking updates, special discounts, goodwill-building messages such as holiday greetings, or new product announcements.

Email is commonly used for these purposes:

- To accomplish routine, noncontroversial business activities (e.g., setting up meetings and appointments, reminders, notices, quick updates, information sharing).
- To save time: People can look through 60 to 100 emails an hour.
- To save money: One email can go to many people, including globally distributed teams.
- To allow readers to deal with messages at their convenience, when timing is not crucial.
- To communicate accurately.
- To provide readers with details for reference (e.g., meeting information).
- To create a “paper trail,” that is, a record of an interaction.

Emails do not work well for some purposes. For example, negative critiques and bad news generally have better outcomes when delivered in person. Avoid passing on any email communication that could be misinterpreted, such as that featuring sarcasm or irony. If your name is attached, you are responsible for how the audience perceives your message—even if your intent was sound.

Memos A memo is a document using memo format to send messages to readers in your organization (see Appendix A for examples). These days, memos typically cover the same information as email. Indeed, they are typically sent via email as an attachment. However, memo format makes the message a bit more formal.

Text Messages Text messages allow for quick communication that falls between the immediacy of a phone call and that of an email. Researchers have found that people do not like to use texting for larger tasks, more complex questions or instructions, or messages connected in any way with conflict.¹³ For simple communication, texting is an appropriate and efficient choice. For example, patients can request appointment reminders from their doctor's office via text or the doctor's office can request that a client confirm an appointment via text. This practice reduces forgotten appointments, improving overall efficiency, and builds goodwill between doctor and patient. In fact, 70% of patients see value in receiving texts from their health care providers.¹⁴

Texting is not used just between businesses and clients; it can assist internal communication as well. For example, Canada and parts of Europe have adopted a new system allowing copilots and air-traffic controllers to communicate by texting.¹⁵ The new system helps reduce communication errors that traditionally occur when using radios, mistakes such as misheard instructions and numbers. It saves valuable