Chapter 1

Chapter 1

The Basics

"You can dream, create, design, and build the most wonderful place in the world . . . but it requires people to make the dream a reality."—Walt Disney

Have you ever considered pursuing a "Ducktorate Degree?" How about a "Mouster's Degree?" That's what you'll earn if you participate in the Disney World College Program. Every year the Disney corporation recruits thousands of college students from around the world to "live, earn, and learn" in the Magic Kingdom. The Disney organization understands that the success of their business is directly related to the communication skills of their cast members (employees). In order for guests to experience the Disney Magic, cast members are trained in the basic skills associated with effective communication. They are directed to:

- Greet every guest (generating a verbal message of welcome).

- Make eye contact and smile (convey a nonverbal message of attention and fun).

- Display cheerful and cordial body language.

- Say thank you (polite messages of gratitude).

- Preserve the "magical" experience (use creativity to entertain and engage guests interpersonally).

Disney is an organization that understands the importance of people to its success as a business. By training cast members to communicate effectively and creatively, Disney presents a magical message that keeps guests coming back.

Does demonstrating cheerful and polite verbal and nonverbal messages encourage positive feedback from message receivers like the guests at Disney? Is communication more appealing when message senders are upbeat and friendly? Could other businesses benefit from the instruction offered at the Disney World College Program?
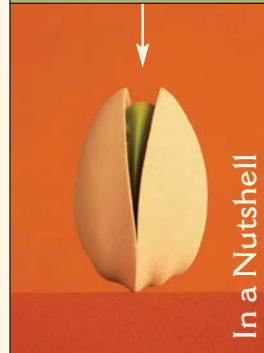
What Is Communication?

Every business—whether a multibillion-dollar company such as Disney or a small family-owned grocery store—relies on the communication skills of its employees to be successful. But what makes for effective communication? As our "In a Nutshell" discusses, communication involves listening and the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages. It can be formal or informal. It may involve a large group or just two people. Disney conveys its magical message effectively by educating its cast members about the numerous ways of communicating. To understand the many ways business professionals communicate, it is important to first understand how communication works.

communication is creating message meaning within a person and exchanging meaning between people.

Communication is creating message meaning within a person and exchanging meaning between people. It is a continuous process that occurs in various contexts and uses cultural symbols. It is a process that purposefully uses spoken, nonverbal, and visual symbols. Communication involves and affects nearly every disciplinary field, including business.

Skills for 21st-Century Business

Modern communication has many applications in the world of business. Virtually all forms of business messages—from simple greetings to customers to formal memos, reports, and presentations—require solid communication skills. Most American businesses (88 percent) currently train their employees in some type of communication skills. Businesses tend to focus on critical thinking and listening skills, inter-

Twenty-first-century business communicators need multiple communication skills.
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personal communication (including interviewing and nonverbal interactions), collaborative communication involving groups and teams, writing, and oral presentations.

You will need to be skilled in intrapersonal, business, interpersonal, small-group, verbal, and public communication. These categories overlap in a variety of ways.

1. **Intrapersonal or internal communication** involves the internal processing of messages. Individuals generate, send, and receive messages. Critical thinking and reasoning, decision making, and message design are all skills that you develop and use by self-communicating. You generate ideas and develop them into messages in thinking and internal dialogue. The messages you create need to be designed in the most effective way to increase mutual understanding and shared meaning with other people. In business, you need to critically think through, evaluate, plan for, and design messages intrapersonally (internally) for eventual delivery to a variety of business audiences. Intrapersonal communication is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

   As an intrapersonal skill, **listening** involves the active mental and cognitive process of attending to and interpreting sounds. Craig Weatherup, chair and chief executive officer (CEO) of Pepsi Bottling Group, believes that listening is one of the most important communication skills. He first had to develop sensitive listening skills (focusing on the feelings and emotions of other people) while working in Japan for Pepsi. Since English was not the native language for his Japanese associates, Weatherup learned to interpret the emotional

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FIGURE 1.1

Intrapersonal Communication
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meaning in messages. The listening skills he developed early in his career have helped him throughout his years at Pepsi. As CEO, he tries to communicate one-on-one with as many of his 40,000 employees as he can. He listens for their feelings about the business, not just the latest trends. In fact, when he visits the company's 300 sites, he listens actively to the excitement and frustrations expressed in the language his managers use to better gauge how his strategies are working.

In business, you will spend nearly half your working day listening. In fact, much of what we know and learn comes from listening. Unfortunately, the skill of listening is underdeveloped in most people. It is estimated that we remember only about 20 percent of what we hear, and fewer than 2 percent of us actually receive formal listening training.

Reading is the intrapersonal process of attending to and interpreting written language. Business professionals spend more time listening and reading than using any other communication skills. Effective reading involves selecting relevant or important points from a document and interpreting those points for meaning.

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2. **Business communication** involves the design and exchange of messages between members who work interdependently to accomplish organizational goals. Business communication involves the flow of communication and the structure through which messages are exchanged among an organization's members. The changing nature of business due to technological innovations, ever-evolving corporate structures, and mergers necessitates that business communicators be flexible, knowledgeable, and innovative.

business communication involves the design and exchange of messages between and among members to accomplish organizational goals.

3. **Interpersonal or external communication** is the process of interaction and the exchange of messages between at least two people who co-create a relationship. Intrapersonal, spoken, nonverbal, and listening skills are used simultaneously as people communicate. As people think, talk, and listen, they also express themselves nonverbally through various body and facial movements and posture. Interpersonal communication also involves leadership skills in business groups and on teams. On September 11, 2001, Bob Mulholland, senior vice president at Merrill Lynch, demonstrated not only effective interpersonal skills but strong leadership. When terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York City, Mulholland and his staff were working across West Street at Two World Financial Center. Naturally, many of the employees at Merrill Lynch panicked and others became frozen with fear as they watched smoke pour out of the building directly across from them. Mulholland quickly gathered information about his employees' relatives who were located in the tower buildings. He listened attentively and talked to each of his employees in a soothing, gentle manner to comfort them. He calmly

interpersonal or external communication is the interaction between at least two people who co-create a relationship.

acknowledged employees' feelings and reassured each one that they had time to escape. Finally, Mulholland walked the employees down the stairs and out of the building. Fortunately, all of the Merrill Lynch employees were able to evacuate the building before the towers collapsed across the street.

Organizations consist of people, and as a professional you will spend up to 80 percent of your time interacting with others, which is why strong interpersonal skills are a must for any business professional.

4. **Small-group communication** involves two or more people who join together to accomplish specific goals. In the world of business you will almost certainly need to work with other people. Committees, project groups, and problem-solving teams bring different professionals together to plan, develop, and implement company initiatives. Knowing how to participate, cooperate, and collaborate as part of a team is essential. Surmounting and resolving the conflicts that arise as people work together is also a fundamental group communication skill.

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5. **Verbal communication** encompasses the use of both *spoken* and *written language* to accomplish message goals. As a business communicator, you will use your verbal skills to convey a wide variety of business messages, including formal and informal discussions during meetings, interviews, and presentations. You will also routinely talk to customers and vendors and network with other professionals. While many business professionals prefer spoken communication to written communication, 21st-century business depends on workers who can write well. Virtually all professionals—from executives, engineers, and lawyers to accountants and computer scientists—need to be able to write effective business messages. Entry-level professionals and managers alike prepare written messages (including e-mails, memos, reports, letters, and proposals) every day.

> **verbal communication** is the use of both spoken and written language to accomplish message goals.

6. **Public communication** refers to public speaking or lectures presented to a group audience. Public speaking is a fact of everyday life for many business professionals. Promotional, sales, proposal, new-product or program, and progress or research presentations are standard in business. Not all presentations are delivered to outside audiences; business communicators also routinely present information informally at meetings and during small group discussions.

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Basic Communication Principles

Communication Is a Process

The exchange of messages is ongoing and dynamic. Our internal communication and our exchanges with others are always changing and growing. Consider your communication with a hiring manager who is

filling a position you are interested in. Your initial contact with the manager will be quite formal—written communication in the form of a résumé. You will then likely have to utilize your oral communication skills in the interview process. Once you get the job, your interaction with the manager will evolve as you become part of a team and a corporate culture. The process of communication is a moving and evolving set of experiences that influence our present and future interactions. Intrapersonal and interpersonal communication are both active and flexible.

Communication Is Contextual

Our interactions with others occur during specific social situations, in different physical environments, and for a variety of purposes. Our communication differs depending on the people involved and the circumstances in which it occurs. Your interactions with co-workers are different from those with family and friends or with other students at school. Our moods, our attitudes, and the roles we play also contribute to changing communication contexts. Each communication experience is unique, because the people, roles, situations, and environments are unique and always changing.

nonverbal communication includes body movements such as gestures, facial expressions, and vocal sounds that do not use words.

Communication Is Continuous

From the moment we are born, we are always communicating. Even if we do not talk, we still communicate nonverbally. **Nonverbal communication** includes body movements such as gestures, facial expressions, and vocal sounds that do not use words. Not all of our communication is intentional: We may not intend to scratch, twitch, or yawn, but some people may still interpret these as nonverbal communication behaviors. If, for example, you inadvertently yawn during a business presentation, the speaker may think you are bored. Even if you really are interested but you got only four hours of sleep last night, the speaker may interpret the yawn as a message you are trying to communicate.

We also continually communicate internally. Intrapersonal communication involves both intentional and unintentional message exchange. Some of our thought processing is unintentional, such as when the body signals thirst to the brain, but our internal critical thinking, listening, and reading are intentional communication. Even during our interactions with other people, we communicate internally as illustrated in Figure 1.2.

CREATIVE

CHALLENGE

Imagine you have decided not to communicate at all for several days. To accomplish your mission, you travel deep into a barren winter desert so that you will not run in to any other people. You bring sufficient water, food, and wood to sustain you for the duration of your isolated adventure. Alone in the desert, you pitch your tent and prepare to start a small campfire.

Now that you are alone in your desert camp, miles away from other people, can you meet your goal? Can you stop communicating completely? Come to class prepared to discuss your conclusion.

Communication Coordinates Our Relationships

Our relationships with other people are coordinated, negotiated, and maintained through communication. For example, your relationships with your co-workers evolve through the varied exchange of verbal and nonverbal communication styles, which involve the selection of words and expressions used by individual communicators. As a relationship develops, we learn about and adapt to the other person's communication style. While the nature and scope of our social and professional relationships vary, in all of them our listening, verbal, and nonverbal behaviors facilitate the interpersonal interactions through which our relationships develop and grow.

Communication Is Symbolic

When we communicate, we use a series of symbols that comprise our messages and help us to share meaning. A **symbol** is a type of sign that has no natural connection to the idea, word, or object it represents. Symbols are learned codes, such as spoken or written language, that we create and assign to objects or feelings. The word symbol "sun" represents a huge, bright star that illuminates our planet as we orbit around it. While the word *sun* is arbitrary because it has no direct connection to the star it represents, we have learned to associate the word symbol with the object.

Our learned symbols allow us to design messages that others can interpret based on our shared experience with certain verbal and visual symbols. On the other hand, misunderstandings can occur because

symbol a type of sign that has no natural connection to the idea, word, or object it represents.

JUMP IN!

Ogden:	Hey Majic! Wassup?
Majic:	Hey Og. Just got online. Problems with the puter today.
Ogden:	???
Majic:	Keep getting the blue screen of death: fatal disk error.
Ogden:	Horrors.
Majic:	You're not kidding.
Ogden:	BTW, did you hear about the latest virus: Goner?
Majic:	Yep, downloaded the medicine for it too, JIC.
Ogden:	Smart.
Majic:	Can never be too prepared, IMHO.
Ogden:	Hang on, my mom's calling me. BRB.
Majic:	K

different people sometimes attach different meanings to the same symbols, especially if they bring different contexts to the symbols. A couple of symbols are illustrated in Figure 1.3.

Communication Is Culturally Linked

culture is a socially constructed way of thinking and behaving in the world.

Our communication style is linked to the culture into which we were born. **Culture** is a socially constructed way of thinking and behaving in the world. We develop culture through symbols that communicate shared perspectives and expectations for behavior. The most obvious cultural aspect of communication is that members of a particular group share the same symbols for language. The most obvious difference between people from other cultures is that they speak another language and share different meanings.

intercultural communication focuses on the interactions between people from different cultural groups.

Intercultural communication focuses on the interactions between people from different cultural groups. Because attitudes, perspectives, and communication styles can be different, our verbal and nonverbal business messages need to be designed with an understanding of individual organizational cultures and other cultural groups. For example, in some Latin American, European, and Arabic cultures, it is natural in conversation to communicate nonverbally by standing very close to others. In American culture, it makes people uncomfortable when someone stands or sits closer than about 18 inches from us.

Symbols

Warning

Infinity

Medical

Peace

Radiation

Wheelchair
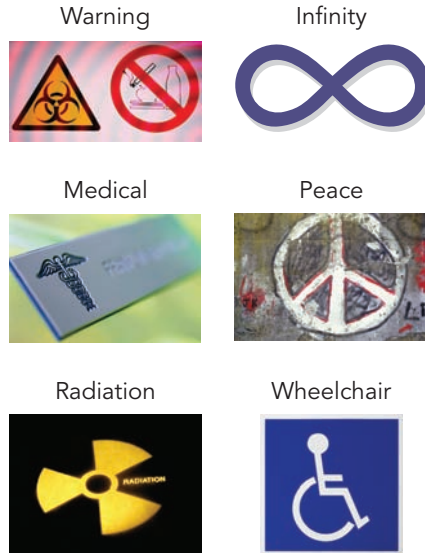
Communication Is Collaborative

When people work together to accomplish a business goal, they are collaborating. Business communicators may collaborate with many people, both within and outside the organization. While collaborators may have different perspectives, attitudes, skills, and cultural values, they come together to solve problems, make decisions, and work toward the achievement of business goals.

At Nortel Networks, an accounting firm, employees learn to work collaboratively as a team by performing creative improvisation on

Collaborative writing	Sharing the planning, analyzing, composing, and editing responsibilities with two or more people is how the process works. Writing as a team or group frequently occurs out of necessity, especially with a business document such as a proposal—which may be too extensive for one person to prepare or requires more time than one person can devote to it.
Collaborative decision making and problem solving	In a variety of business situations, more companies are embracing group decision making. Teamwork can enhance decisions because it provides a greater variety of ideas and alternatives. While reaching decisions as a team can be time-consuming, it often yields better solutions and alternatives.
Collaborative presentations	Two or more people who integrate material and speak together publicly about a specific topic and make team presentations can gain and maintain audience attention, while each individual speaker's specific skills can enhance the development and content of speech material. While all public speaking requires planning and preparation, a coordinated effort requires a team focus on writing, speech organization, visual aid design, smooth speaker-to-speaker transitions, and coordinated responses to audience questions.

stage. Through these performances, Nortel accountants learn to work together, think fast on their feet, and adapt to change. Through its innovative training programs, the Second City comedy troupe has helped corporate clients such as Nortel Networks, AT&T, Motorola, and Kraft Foods improve their employees' collaborative skills by practicing creative teamwork.

Types of collaborative communication in business include collaborative writing, decision making, problem solving, and presentations.

Communication Is Ethical

Ethics are principles that guide appropriate conduct

To be ethical, business communication must be trustworthy and in the audience's best interest. Business **ethics** involves a system of principles that guide the proper conduct of companies and individuals. From a general standpoint, integrity, honesty, good judgment, and fairness form the basis of ethical behavior. Business practices that are fair and don't disadvantage customers, shareholders, stakeholders, or employees are usually ethical. Most ethical business practices are based on standards rooted in cultural values and moral expectations regarding what we say and do. The most common unethical business practices include erroneous financial reporting, fraud, inaccurate reporting of time and travel expenses, and conflicts of interest, among others. Unethical communication can include misrepresentation or distortion of information, making false promises, and plagiarism. Many unethical behaviors, such as insider stock trading, are illegal because they place a person or persons at an unfair disadvantage. What makes insider trading unethical (and illegal) is that when a stockbroker receives information that hasn't been made public and then acts on that information (by buying or selling stocks), this action may disadvantage other people who are unaware of the nonpublic information. However, some actions that aren't illegal may still be considered unethical. For example, one employee may take credit for the work performed by another employee. Even though this behavior isn't necessarily illegal, it's still considered unethical and unfair.

One way to guide your own activities is to use a simple yet effective technique. When you're uncertain about what to do in a business situation, think about how you would feel if your actions became public and everyone became aware of what you did. While this technique does not provide the answer for all ethical dilemmas, it can help you make more ethical decisions.

How Does Communication Work?

The process of communication is visually illustrated in Figure 1.4. The primary goal of communication is to achieve mutual understanding of message meanings. When we communicate, we want

ETHICS IN ACTION

In February 2005, the *Economist Intelligence Unit* published the results of its corporate responsibility survey. Corporate responsibility has been defined as "the integration of stakeholders' social, environmental and other concerns into a company's business operations." In simpler terms, corporate responsibility is the practical application of business ethics in the day-to-day activities of a business. Such business activities are characterized by fairness and integrity. The survey, which targeted corporate executives and high-profile investors, indicated that ethical business behavior is currently a higher priority than ever before. In the survey, 67 percent of the executives felt that employee ethical behavior is one of the most important aspects of corporate responsibility. Still, these executives felt that there is plenty of room for improvement. In fact, 48 percent of the executives said they feel pressure from stakeholders to improve the firm's level of corporate responsibility.

Assignment

Go online to find and research a business that has an interesting approach to communicating ethical responsibility to its employees. Develop a two-minute presentation for the class that describes the organization's efforts to build employee awareness about ethical responsibility.

SOURCES: Penner, S., & Holloway, N. "Oracle and Economist Intelligence Unit Announce Results from Corporate Responsibility Survey." *Oracle Press Release,* February 10, 2005. Retrieved online, February 12, 2005: http://www.oracle.com/corporate/press/2005_feb/orcl_eiu_final.html; "The Importance of Corporate Responsibility." Economist Intelligence Unit, January 2005. Retrieved online, February 12, 2005: http://www.oracle.com/go/?&Src=3695272&Act=5.
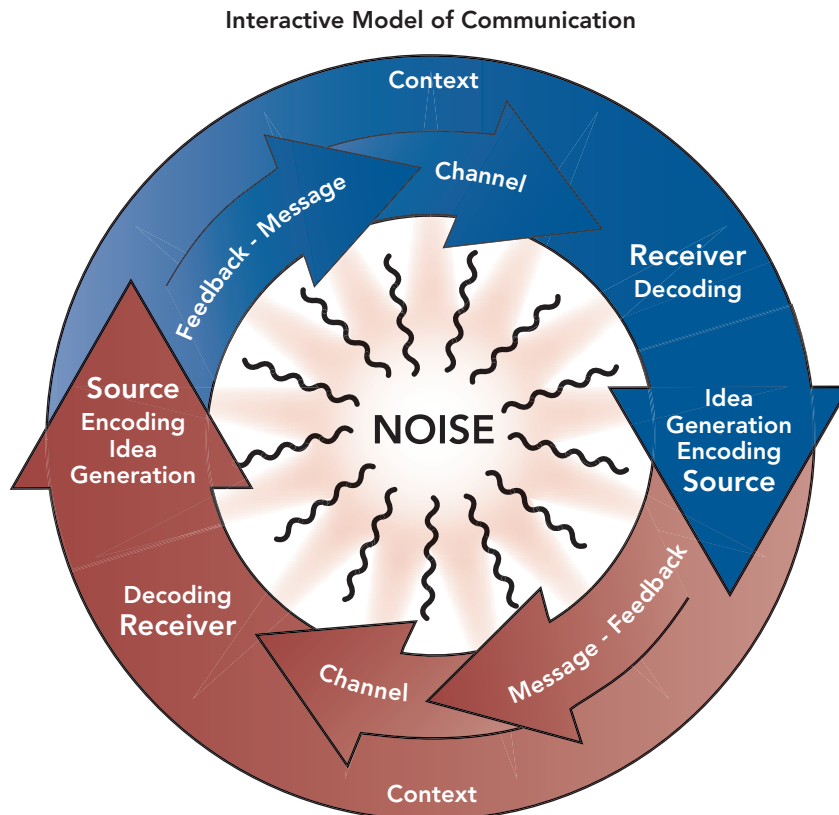
Interactive Model of Communication

FIGURE 1.4

Interactive Model of Communication

others to understand what we have in mind and to accept our ideas. Gary Grates, executive director of internal communications for General Motors, says, "The biggest issue that leaders face is whether people understand them. Whether you're talking about Wall Street, partners, customers, or employees, people must understand the organization's story . . . Otherwise, you're going to lose valuation, sales, new opportunities, or employees."

Mutual understanding requires that communicators understand message content and emotional meaning. When mutual understanding occurs, we achieve **high fidelity,** which is the ideal communication experience. With high fidelity, the meaning the source of the message (the sender) has in mind is exactly the message the receiver understands. As we further explore the various components in the communication process, you'll begin to see how challenging high fidelity can be to achieve.

high fidelity is the achievement of mutual understanding, which is the ideal communication experience.

Is High Fidelity Hard to Achieve?

Noise can make high fidelity hard to achieve, and it is the primary reason for communication breakdowns. **Noise** is any interference that interrupts or affects the exchange of messages. Noise can be internal, external, or message based.

noise is any interference that interrupts or affects the exchange of messages.

- *Internal noise* can be any psychological or physiological interruption that makes the message difficult to design, receive, or interpret. Emotions, prejudices, or preoccupation with certain thoughts can impede the communication process for both sources and receivers. If, for example, you are thinking about what you want to say at an upcoming department meeting, you may not adequately listen to your colleague as she talks to you about a problem with the account tracking system. From a physiological perspective, if you are hungry, tired, or physically ill, the messages you design may be unclear or may become fragmented and jumbled. In that case, the receiver may not interpret your message meaning effectively.

CREATIVE

CHALLENGE

Create an example using each source of noise. Then write a paragraph for each example that describes how the noise interferes with the process of message exchange between communicators. Come to class prepared to discuss your examples.

- *External noise* involves any environmental interference—such as loud sounds, strong odors, extreme temperatures, or even lighting conditions—that affects the exchange of messages.
- *Message-based noise* refers to design flaws or differences in meaning that can distort or confuse messages. Emotionally charged words, grammatical or typographical errors, confusing terms, or inappropriate visuals can create message noise for receivers. Noise is illustrated in Figure 1.5.
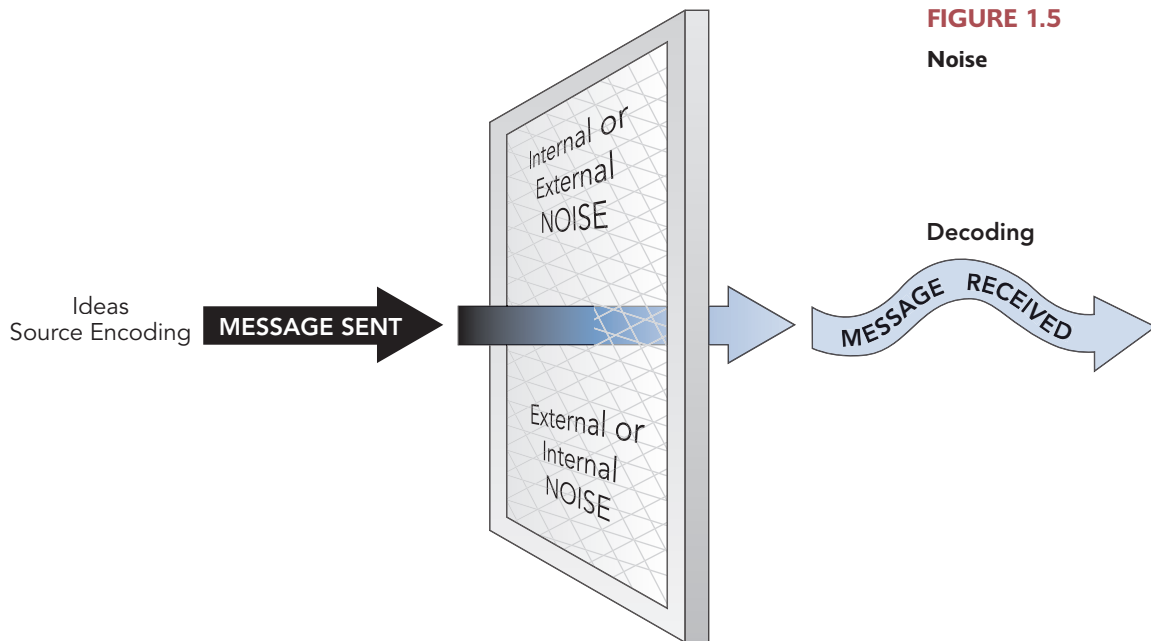
FIGURE 1.5

Noise

Because noise is like a filter, sometimes messages are distorted or misunderstood.

Components of the Communication Process

The interactive process of communication involves a series of related events that comprise the various components of a communication experience.

1. **Ideas and encoding.**
   Ideas are generated at the point of perception, which occurs when sensory information from the environment or from inside your mind stimulates and arouses your attention. As you initially perceive information, you begin to generate raw thoughts and ideas. In processing the thoughts, you begin to transform them into verbal, nonverbal, or visual symbols. The transformation of ideas into symbols is referred to as **encoding,** which is the design of communication messages. Encoding involves formulating your thoughts into meaningful *symbols* to think about or to share with others. If you intend to share thoughts with others, the encoding process involves determining what symbols will be most appropriate for your receivers and how to transmit the messages to reach high fidelity.

2. **Communication source and receiver.**
   Each person in the communication process is both a message source and a receiver throughout a given interaction. A message **source** is the originator and transmitter of the message. The **receiver** is the recipient of the message, or the destination point. We constantly

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transmit messages verbally and nonverbally, and we also receive aural and visual messages from others concurrently.

3. **Messages.**

When ideas are encoded and designed into one or more symbols, they become **messages** used to communicate meaning. We think about these messages internally; formulate them into words, behaviors, or visual images; and send them to other people.

4. **Communication channels.**

A **channel** is a medium that carries messages within and between people. Thinking is an intrapersonal channel that allows us to send and receive messages within ourselves. Because verbal communication includes both spoken and written messages, the voice is a verbal channel of communication, as is a written memo, business letter, or mission statement. Nonverbal behaviors such as body movements or vocal sounds also carry messages. Channels enable us to transmit messages to other people and to communicate within ourselves.

Channels can be subdivided into two primary categories: human and technological. **Human channels** include thoughts, verbal communication (speech and writing), nonverbal behaviors (body move-

messages ideas encoded and designed into one or more symbols to communicate meaning.

channel a medium that carries messages within and between people.

human channels include thoughts, verbal communication (speech and writing), nonverbal behaviors (body movements and vocal sounds), sound, sight, and smell.

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ments and vocal sounds), sound, sight, and smell. Human channels involve face-to-face interaction and are often better for training, problem solving, decision making, persuading, and working collaboratively in group work.

Technological channels include radio, TV, telephone, fax, video, e-mail, and hand-held devices, among many others. The channel you choose for a given message depends on the speed at which you want it to travel, the cost, the complexity of the message, your reason for communicating, and the receiver you want to reach. Technological channels are convenient for transmitting messages, especially when time and geographic constraints make face-to-face communication difficult.

For example, at NCR, a 123-year-old global technology company, corporate executives from each division all over the country present video quarterly reports to the staff. During the quarterly presentations last fall, one division executive broke with tradition by creating a three-minute action movie instead of using a more conventional video format. This executive used a different channel to present his report because he wanted to demonstrate the division's speed, passion, and energy. Reactions from NCR staffers were very positive.

5. **Decoding.**

To **decode** means to perceive, translate, and interpret information received in a message. Literally, decoding is listening, reading, or observing a message transmitted through a channel. Once a message is perceived and the information is translated in the brain, it can be interpreted. The *interpretation* stage of decoding involves attaching meaning to symbols based on the conveyed message

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Jump In!

JUMP IN!

You work for a shipping company. The dispatcher gets a call that one of the trucks has overturned on Route 66 near Flagstaff, Arizona. Part of the shipment may be salvageable (it was mostly pillows and bedding headed for Las Vegas), and you need to get someone out there to assess the damage to the truck, its load, and its driver. You jot yourself a quick note:

Down 66 near Flag. Tell Marc to get T. out there, check tr., load. Joe going to LV hosp. Call CHP, Flag police (report), ins., Joe's wife (#where?).

You need to tell Marc, the company's owner, so after checking the driver's human resources file, you sit down to write an e-mail. But now you're not sure that you understand everything you wrote down. For example, "T" could be Tom Johnson, Marc's son and foreman of the warehouse, chief of operations Maria Tannhauser, or business manager Tony Takahatsu. Write an e-mail to Marc Johnson telling him what has occurred and the actions you are taking. Use as much logic as possible to decode your own note.

content and emotional tone. Interpretation also involves your attitude, level of knowledge, and experience as the message receiver. Thus, not only is the intention of the message source important, but the experience and perspective of the receiver are as well. Because different people may interpret symbols and meaning in slightly different ways, the message received is not necessarily identical to the one transmitted.

6. **Message feedback.**

   Feedback is a special type of message designed as a response to a received message. Feedback is a critical component in communication because it enables us to gauge how the messages we sent were interpreted and aids in the design of future transmissions.

feedback is a special type of message designed as a response to a received message.

Communicating Intrapersonally

Intrapersonal communication is the most basic form of communication. It is the cornerstone for all other forms, including interpersonal, group, and business communication. Many forms of communication focus on the number of people in the process, the channels used for message transmittal, and the flow of messages. Intrapersonal communication focuses on the mental processing that occurs within an individual. People design and create messages through their thought processes. To improve the way we design messages, we need to focus on how we think as communicators.

Intrapersonal communication is a private interaction within a single person who is the encoder, decoder, and transmitter of messages. From a cognitive perspective, intrapersonal communication is a mental activity that involves transforming symbols and sensations into meaning. As discussed earlier, symbols are learned codes (such as spoken or written language) that we attach to objects, ideas, or emotions. We mentally process symbols every time we communicate, both within ourselves and with others. While intrapersonal communication does not require interaction with other people, mental activity is obviously not restricted to those moments when we are alone; our thinking minds are operating continuously. When we communicate within ourselves or with other people, we are constantly sending and receiving messages internally through the thinking process.

Encoding and Decoding Messages Intrapersonally

People receive information externally from their environment and internally from within themselves. Information can be anything we see, taste, hear, smell, or feel—including verbal, visual, and nonverbal symbols, which are perceived through our senses. Choosing certain information to focus on is called **selectivity.** We select only some

selectivity is choosing certain information to focus on.

Intrapersonal communication sometimes requires an interpreter, and sometimes the interpreter can help you find a job that suits you perfectly. That's what career counselors do. Career counselors help new job seekers and mid-career executives choose a position that will satisfy both their personal and professional goals. A good career counselor is one who is licensed by the National Board for Certified Counselors. You can view the requirements for licensing at ncda.ord/about/poles.htm. The counselor administers a series of tests to the job seeker in an effort to determine what internal conflicts or frustrations may be deterring him or her from finding the perfect job. Then, the counselor provides skills training and network contacts that will help the job seeker find a better job. For more information about what career counselors do, there are several websites, both private and public, that offer information:

- www.wls.lib.ny.us/webs/counseling.htm
- www.licence.state.tx.us/CAREER/career.htm
- www.skacareercounselors.com
- www.executive.compuserve.monster.com/articles/teamofcounselors, careercounselorsne.org

information because we can process only so much at any given time. We also exercise selectivity by choosing information that is consistent with what we already believe. Once perceived, information is decoded mentally, which means it is organized and transformed into linguistic or visual symbols. Decoding also involves attaching meaning to symbols, which become our thoughts and ideas.

The encoding process happens when an individual formulates a response to received information. Encoding is not done exclusively during interaction with other people. It also occurs when someone creates and constructs messages for internal analysis or contemplation. For example, let's say you observe a co-worker, Kasha, frowning during a company meeting. As you perceive Kasha, you may decide that the frown on her face means she is dissatisfied. In your mind, you think that Kasha probably disagrees with or dislikes the information presented during the meeting. While you may misinterpret Kasha's behavior (her frown may or may not actually be a reaction to the message), you still mentally process the information and construct meanings and messages to communicate with yourself.

The Meaning of Symbols

People create and interpret meaning—symbols do not. While some literal meanings may be synonymous with our individual interpretation, we determine meaning based on intrapersonal, interpersonal, contextual, and social factors.

Intrapersonal factors	Individuals create ideas and meaning associations as they process information internally. Memories, past experiences, and knowledge form the foundation of our interpretation of events and concepts.
Interpersonal factors	Socially constructed or negotiated meanings develop as people interact and build relationships.
Contextual factors	The surrounding environmental, psychological, and social factors help us to shape meaning.
Social factors	Many cultural and familial influences affect our creation of meaning.

Sending Ourselves Messages

Because intrapersonal communication occurs internally, the channels we use to communicate with ourselves are human channels. The three primary channels used in the transmission of intrapersonal communication are self-talk, mental imagery, and nonverbal behaviors.

Self-talk	Self-talk is the internal use of verbal language symbols while thinking.
Mental imagery	Mental imagery refers to the images an individual visualizes without words.
Nonverbal behaviors	Intrapersonal communication involves both intentional and unintentional nonverbal behavior. For example, when you think about ideas, you may also move like Auguste Rodin's famous sculpture "The Thinker," whose head leans forward and presses against his fist. Nonverbal behaviors may or may not be observable by others depending on the situation in which the communication occurs.

The Intrapersonal and Business Communication Connection

In the world of work as in life, the way we have learned to think is central to the way we communicate with others and ourselves. Thinking through the messages we want to communicate can make a big difference in how competently we communicate with other people. Some of our messages are poorly developed and designed because we fail to think through what we want to share. Most of us have transmitted messages that we later wished we had not or have spent considerable time clarifying, explaining, rewriting, and rephrasing. To communicate

effectively with other professionals in business, we have to learn how to create clear messages.

To do that, we need to improve our intrapersonal design skills—our ability to conceptualize, generate ideas, combine ideas, plan, evaluate, and use reasoning and logic. In short, business communicators need to become business communication designers.

Designing Business Communication

When we create messages, we communicate with ourselves first. The creation of messages is an intrapersonal encoding process that enables us to plan and design messages that can be understood and accepted by others. The construction of a given message is the domain of the **communication designer,** who skillfully plans and designs effective business messages. To be effective communicators we must all embrace the role of message designers, just as Picasso and Rembrandt were artful designers of visual images and Tommy Hilfiger and Liz Claiborne are designers of clothing. Effective messages are easy to understand. They can inform, build awareness, and influence the behavior and beliefs of other people.

As we communicate with ourselves, we begin to generate thoughts and ideas. While some of these thoughts and ideas will be kept private, others will eventually be transmitted to other people. Those thoughts and ideas that will be shared with others often require solid communication design strategies to achieve organizational goals.

What Is a Communication Design Strategy?

A **design strategy** offers options and techniques that enable a business communicator to design messages more effectively so they will accomplish communication goals. Like a business plan, which guides the development and growth of a business enterprise, a communication strategy guides the development of business messages. For example, Southwest Airlines has a customer-friendly, fun, team-based strategy for providing customers with inexpensive, no-frills air travel. The success of the airline's basic strategy (to provide economical air service in a fun and friendly way) has endured for many years. But the company is flexible enough to change with the times while still maintaining a consistent strategic focus.

At Continental Airlines, Bonnie Reitz, senior vice president for sales and distribution, created a new

Auguste Rodin's famous sculpture "The Thinker" demonstrates intrapersonal and nonverbal behavior.
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communication designer
someone who skillfully plans and designs effective business messages.

design strategy a set of techniques that enable a business communicator to design messages more effectively and accomplish communication goals.

CREATIVE

CHALLENGE

Think of a situation that you experienced when you transmitted a message without thinking about what you wanted to convey. Write two paragraphs that describe what happened and what you needed to do to clarify the message for your receiver.

communication strategy after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. To allay passenger concerns about air travel, Reitz and her staff designed a strategy that used various channels—including faxes, flyers, letters, and PowerPoint presentations—to detail the airline's safety and security procedures and the efforts of federal agencies and aircraft manufacturers to prevent future hijackings.

Design strategies may be predesigned or integrated.

Predesigned strategies	Predesigned strategies, such as the one outlined in Chapter 3 and throughout this text, involve tactics for communicating in business. Communication strategies can help you design business messages that require public speaking, verbal and non-verbal interaction, written documents, group or teamwork, visuals, and technology. The benefit of predesigned strategies is that they offer tried and tested techniques that can significantly enhance your communication competence. One limitation is that they may not completely fit every unique communication experience. Because no two communication experiences are ever exactly alike, a strategy is only as good as the communicator who uses it, given the specific demands of the communication situation.
Integrated and situational strategies	Integrated strategies involve the modification of predesigned communication formulas to match the situational needs of the communicator. Combining new and existing techniques can be very useful in difficult or complex communication situations. Situational strategies are unique and impromptu integrated methods used for specific communication events. For example, there will be times in your career when you will need to communicate in unconventional circumstances that are not outlined in a textbook. Some situations will require that you plan and develop your own strategic formula to communicate successfully with others. Often the foundation for learning how to think strategically is by example, through the practice and use of predesigned strategies.

STRATEGIES
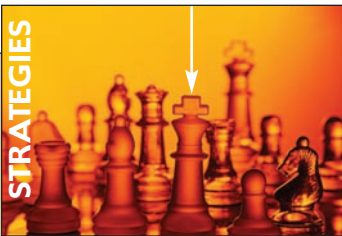
Strategies

1. Once you send a message, particularly in face-to-face interaction, you can't take it back. Once you say something to someone or send a message, you can't erase that experience. Because you can't reverse most communication, it is vitally important that you intrapersonally encode and design your messages effectively before you send them to others. Often just thinking before speaking or writing can help you avoid miscommunication. Thinking

about what you want from the receiver and how he or she is likely to respond can also help you crystallize the message. Finally, evaluate how well your receiver is likely to understand the meaning attached to the language or visual symbols you choose when designing the message.

2. It is important for a business communicator to know when to listen. Numerous benefits come from paying attention to co-workers, customers, subordinates, and superiors. Listening to learn and remember new information is a skill that can help you understand others and design better messages.

3. Collaborating with others can be a rich and rewarding experience that offers a chance for you to grow as a business professional. It can also be challenging and frustrating. To work with others productively, you need to listen, offer developed ideas, and accept that people have different perspectives and different ways of approaching work tasks.

4. When you work collaboratively, you may find yourself working with people from other cultural groups. You need to be mindful of the differences between you and others and of what you can do to enhance the communication experience. One way you can learn about other cultural groups is to read documents and literature that describe the business practices, customs, and etiquette of a particular group. You might also talk informally to co-workers who have traveled overseas or to members of the cultural group and ask questions about appropriate social and professional conduct.

5. Communication does not happen in a vacuum. Your interactions with other people occur in a context. You can determine the context by analyzing the physical environment. When, where, and with whom are you communicating? You can also assess your own mood or attitude and the attitudes of the people you are interacting with. Many factors, including the roles of the people involved, contribute to the context in which communication occurs. Being aware of these factors can help you to send and receive messages more effectively.

6. Carefully select channels to carry your messages. To determine the right channel, use your intrapersonal critical thinking skills. Think about the person or persons you want to communicate with, the reason for your message, the speed of the channel, and whether the channel will be appropriate for the receiver.

7. When you interact with other people, remember you are using verbal, nonverbal, and listening skills at the same time. Be sure your gestures and eye behaviors match the verbal statements you make. Excessive or inappropriate nonverbal behaviors are a sure way to create noise for your receiver.

8. Remember that noise is anything that interferes with the communication process. To avoid internal noise, practice listening without judging or planning your next message until the speaker has finished talking. Make sure that you aren't distracted by fatigue or hunger when you communicate with others. While some external noise may be inescapable, you can move to another area that provides a better environment or arrange a different time when your communication won't be interrupted. To prevent message-based noise, evaluate your messages thoroughly. Check written messages for design flaws such as typos and ambiguous meanings.

9. Become aware of your intrapersonal communication process. Think about how you make sense of and interpret information and how you encode messages. Use self-talk to work through and formulate messages that better express your meaning to other people.

Key Terms

communication (p 4.)

intrapersonal/ internal communication (p. 5)

listening (p. 5)

reading (p. 6)

business communication (p. 6)

interpersonal/ external communication (p. 6)

small-group communication (p. 7)

verbal communication (p. 7)

public communication (p. 7)

nonverbal communication (p. 8)

symbol (p. 9)

culture (p. 10)

intercultural communication (p. 10)

ethics (p. 12)

high fidelity (p. 14)

noise (p. 14)

ideas (p. 15)

encoding (p. 15)

source (p. 15)

receiver (p. 15)

messages (p. 16)

channel (p. 16)

human channels (p. 16)

technological channels (p. 17)

decode (p. 17)

feedback (p. 18)

selectivity (p. 18)

communication designer (p. 21)

design strategy (p. 21)

Summary

- Communication is the process of creating shared meaning through the internal and external exchange of messages.
- Contemporary business requires communicators who are skilled in intrapersonal, business, interpersonal, small-group, verbal, and public communication.

- The basic principles of communication include the following:
  a. The communication process is the ongoing, changing nature of interactions.
  b. Communication context refers to various environmental, situational, social, role, and psychological factors that affect each communication experience.
  c. Continuous communication means that whether intentional or not, we are always communicating.
  d. Communication coordinates our relationships because human interaction facilitates and maintains our personal and professional relations with other people.
  e. Communication uses symbols, which are arbitrary linguistic or visual codes that we culturally learn to associate with objects, ideas, and feelings.
  f. Communication is bound to culture because we learn the symbols, rules, and interaction styles from our group memberships in society.
  g. Communication is often a collaborative experience in business because professionals work together to accomplish organizational goals.
  h. Communication is ethical when your messages are fair and honest and don't disadvantage other people.
- Ideal communication has high fidelity, which refers to mutual understanding between a message source and receiver. The components of the communication process are ideas and encoding, source and receiver, messages, channels, decoding, feedback, and noise.
- Intrapersonal communication is interaction within an individual who encodes, decodes, and transmits messages internally. Intrapersonal communication involves mentally processing or decoding received stimuli and constructing or encoding messages. During the process of decoding and encoding, we determine meaning through intrapersonal, interpersonal, contextual, and social factors. Finally, we transmit messages intrapersonally through human channels such as self-talk, mental imagery, and nonverbal behaviors.
- Business communicators need to create effective messages internally before they send them to others. Competent communication designers plan, develop, and design messages thoughtfully in order to inform, increase awareness, and influence receivers. To design effective business messages, communication designers use predesigned, integrated, and situational strategies for a variety of communication purposes.

Business Communication Projects

1. Assess and identify three of your communication skill strengths and two weaknesses. Write a brief paper describing these strengths and weaknesses. Then outline a plan of action that describes how you will improve the weaknesses you identified. **[Individual]**

2. Your manager is uncertain about assigning a proposal writing project to more than one person in the department because she thinks a team effort may take too much time. The proposal is due in three weeks. You know that the proposal is a huge undertaking and may take even more time if only one person works on it alone. Write an e-mail to your manager in which you respond to the question "What do we need to complete this project effectively and on time?" Include in your e-mail three primary advantages of collaborative work. **[Individual]**

3. Over a period of several weeks, you notice that one of your employees repeatedly comes to work late. You also discover that this employee disappears mysteriously throughout the day without telling anyone where he is going or where he can be reached. You realize that you need to communicate to this employee your concern about his behavior. In two or three paragraphs, explain how you plan to handle this situation and what kind of message (memo, letter, oral, e-mail) should be sent. **[Individual]**

4. Think about how internal, external, or message-based noise interfered with a business or school interaction you had. Review the different types of noise in this chapter, and then write a list of the ways this noise could have been avoided or eliminated. Come to class prepared to discuss your conclusions with your colleagues. **[Individual]**

5. Think about the components of the communication process. Select the appropriate component for each of the following activities (more than one may apply). **[Individual]**

    _____ Deciding what to say in response to a message

    _____ Brainstorming for solutions to a problem

    _____ Laughing at a joke

    _____ Making sense out of a confusing statement

    _____ Sending an e-mail message

6. Work with three of your classmates to think of at least six symbols that you understand without thinking about (consider advertising logos, images related to musicians or bands, and signs you see in public places). Write a paragraph about each symbol, describing any intrapersonal, interpersonal, contextual, and/or social factors that give it meaning for you. **[Group]**

7. You are in a stressful meeting concerning the merger of your company with a large international firm. In the middle of negotiations someone's cell phone goes off, playing a few bars from the *1812 Overture.* Although everyone in the room laughs and releases a little tension, you are embarrassed because it is your assistant's phone. Working in pairs, prepare a five-minute presentation for the class that explains why cell phones and pagers must be turned off or set on vibrate when people are attending business meetings. **[Group]**

8. Think about how you learn best. Are you a visual, intrapersonal, or active learner? Visual learners learn and remember information best through visual images, including illustrations, diagrams, drawings, charts, pictures, and graphics. Intrapersonal learners learn and remember best through listening to or reading verbal symbols (spoken or written words). Active learners learn and remember best through direct experience, including observing nonverbal body movements, demonstrations, and physically doing something.

   Write an e-mail to your instructor that describes how you learn best. In your e-mail, explain why you think you learn more effectively one way rather than through the others. Finally, suggest ways in which you could improve your ability to learn through other methods. **[Individual]**

9. Bring a recent magazine advertisement, sales letter, or brochure with you to class. Break into groups of three or four with your class colleagues to determine a different channel of communication that could be used effectively to convey the same messages presented in the ads, letters, or brochures you brought in. For example, could the information presented in an advertisement for a shampoo also be used for an oral presentation? How would you change the message to suit the new channel? Be prepared to discuss your findings with the rest of the class. **[Group]**

10. Find an article from a journal, a business magazine, or an online source about an unethical situation involving a business or its employees. Write a one-page summary of the situation and describe why the action was unethical. **[Individual]**

11. Break into groups of three with your class colleagues to discuss collaborating and working in teams on school projects or in the business world. Record as many advantages and disadvantages of working in groups as you can. Decide whether the argument for or against collaboration is stronger. Then prepare a brief two-minute presentation for the class that captures your position on working collaboratively. **[Group]**

Discussion Questions

1. Why do businesspeople need to learn about other cultures?
2. What channels of communication do you think are used most frequently in business—human or technological channels? Why?
3. In what ways do you think communication is vital to the success of any business?
4. How is communication used at your college or university? How do you learn about school activities, events, or cancellations?
5. How can effective communication enhance employee morale and productivity?
6. How does feedback improve the communication process and help communicators reach mutual understanding?
7. Why is intrapersonal communication important for a business communicator?
8. Describe business situations that require each of these communication skills:
   a. Intrapersonal communication.
   b. Business communication.
   c. Interpersonal communication.
   d. Small-group and team communication.
   e. Verbal communication.
   f. Public communication.
9. When do you use predesigned communication strategies in your day-to-day life? When do you use integrated or situational strategies?

CREATIVE

CASE

Creative Case

Wal-Mart Goes to Germany

Wal-Mart, well known as an ultra-American company, is developing itself internationally. It is already a major sales force in Canada and Mexico and is currently expanding into Asian and European markets. Although the stores in the United States currently maintain Wal-Mart's highly successful financial standing, forecasters predict that an international presence will be the primary source of future growth.

In 1997, Wal-Mart bought the German Wertkauf chain, comprised of 21 stores. In 1998, it purchased the 74-store Interspar chain. It upgraded and remodeled these stores using the same pattern used for its stores in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. As of 2001, however, Wal-Mart had lost $200 million on these 95 stores, the result of several problems it hadn't considered at the outset.

Some of the intercultural problems should have been expected: complying with commercial regulations in Germany can delay the opening of a "hypermarket" such as Wal-Mart by as much as five years. In September 2001, the German Cartel Office set standards for the minimum price of some items: a level of government intervention that Wal-Mart officials were unprepared for. Wal-Mart also faced 14 competitive hypermarket chains, all of which are well known already to the German people. Add to that mix a sluggish German market, and it was already apparent that Wal-Mart was facing a major challenge.

In addition to these external factors, Wal-Mart made some internal mistakes. The original managers of the Wertkauf and Interspar chains resented the fact that Americans had come into their stores and were telling them how to do their jobs. The message these managers received was that American methods were better. This tension was increased when they found that the new American bosses didn't speak German and insisted on American marketing practices. And when Wal-Mart tried to impose its own supply system on vendors who were used to doing things differently, the vendors simply refused to stock Wal-Mart warehouses.

Wal-Mart realizes that it didn't strategize its intercultural approach or messages well when it entered the German market. As the CEO, H. Lee Scott, Jr., said, "We just walked in and said, 'We're going to lower prices, we're going to add people to the stores, we're going to remodel the stores because inherently that's correct,' and it wasn't. We didn't have the infrastructure to support the kind of things we were doing."

What do you think Wal-Mart did to make its stores in Germany more successful?

Some questions to consider:

1. Do you think there are cultural differences between the German market and the American market? What might they be?
2. Why would German managers and vendors revolt against American business practices?
3. Why do you think the Wal-Mart executives didn't intrapersonally think about the context in which they were communicating?
4. What specific communication skills should Wal-Mart managers have used to start off on better terms with the German managers and vendors?
5. How should Wal-Mart address the problems it faces and begin to collaborate productively with the German people?

ASSIGNMENT

Assignment

Write an e-mail to your instructor that discusses which channel(s) of communication you think Wal-Mart managers should have used when they first began to communicate with the German managers. Defend your selections.