Introduction

As head of Learning & Development for Facebook, Stuart Crabb knows what qualities companies look for in a job candidate. He has over 20 years' experience helping companies hire the right people, develop their talent, and become more culturally diverse.

What does it take to succeed at Facebook? According to Crabb, the answers are "critical thinking," "problem solving," "creativity," and "performance." It also takes being "motivated," "individually accountable," and a "good fit" with the company culture.

These happen to be key traits of successful business communicators, too. They understand that communicating well takes analysis, judgment, and even ingenuity. It takes being attuned to people and to each communication situation. And it takes not only verbal skill but also technological and visual literacy.

Like business itself, business communication can be challenging. But the challenge can be fun, and solving communication problems can bring enormous rewards. This book will help prepare you for an exciting future as both a businessperson and a communicator.

Stuart Crabb, Head of Learning & Development for Facebook

Understanding Workplace Communication

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you will understand the role and nature of communication in business. To achieve this goal, you should be able to

1 Explain the importance of communication to you and to business.

2 Describe the main challenges facing business communicators today.

3 Describe the three main categories of business communication.

4 Describe the formal and informal communication networks of the business organization.

5 Describe factors that affect the types and amount of communicating that a business does.

6 Explain why business communication is a form of problem solving.

7 Describe the various contexts for each act of business communication.

8 Describe the business communication process.

Demonstrating Your Value on a High-Profile Team

You were thrilled to be hired a few months ago as a customer service representative for OrgWare.com, a company that sells management software specially designed for professional associations. The software enables organizations like the American Marketing Association and the Association for Business Communication to manage their finances, keep track of their members, schedule events, and much more.

The company is doing well. In 12 years, it has grown from a five-person business into one that employs 120 people. There are now six regional sales teams located across the U.S., and there's even a development team in Malaysia. But this growth has created a problem: The extensive face-to-face communication that helped make OrgWare.com a thriving business has, in many cases, become difficult or impossible. As a result, the sense of teamwork in the organization is weakening. And it is clear that phone calls, emails, and instant messaging are not sufficient to keep employees engaged and well informed.

The CEO has formed a task force to find an internal communication solution. Will it be an intranet? An electronic newsletter? A secure social networking site? Virtual meetings? A combination? Which would the employees be most likely to read and use? How should the solution be implemented, and what will it cost?

To your surprise, you were asked to help find the answers. The CEO felt that your familiarity with new media could be an asset to the team. You'll also be expected to represent the customer service area and the viewpoints of young employees like yourself.

Everyone on the team will need to research the pros and cons of different media, acquire employees' opinions, write progress reports, share ideas, and ultimately help present the team's recommendation to the top executives.

Are you ready?

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS

LO1 Explain the importance of communication to you and to business.

Your work in business will involve communication—a lot of it—because communication is a major part of the work of business. The overview that follows will help you prepare for the communication challenges that lie ahead.

The Importance of Communication Skills

Because communication is so important in business, businesses want and need people with good communication skills. Evidence of the importance of communication in business is found in numerous surveys of executives, managers, and recruiters. Without exception, these surveys have found that communication ranks at or near the top of the business skills needed for success.

For example, the 431 managers and executives who participated in a survey about graduates' preparedness for the workforce named "oral communications," "teamwork/collaboration," "professionalism/work ethic," "written communications," and "critical thinking/problem solving" as the top "very important skills" job applicants should have.[1] The employers surveyed for the National Association of Colleges and Employers' *Job Outlook Survey* for 2011 rated "communication" as the most valuable soft skill, with "teamwork skills" and "analytical skills" following closely behind.[2] Why is communication ability so highly valued? As one professional trainer explains, "you will need to

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[1] The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management, *Are They Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants into the 21st Century Workforce*, 21, *Partnership for 21st Century Skills*, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2 Oct. 2006, Web, 22 Apr. 2012.

[2] *NACE*, National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2011, Web, 22 Apr. 2012.

Peter Drucker on the Importance of Communication in Business

Peter Drucker, recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom and one of the most respected management consultants, educators, speakers, and writers of our time, made these observations about communication:

> Colleges teach the one thing that is perhaps most valuable for the future employee to know. But very few students bother to learn it. This one basic skill is the ability to organize and express ideas in writing and speaking.

> As soon as you move one step from the bottom, your effectiveness depends on your ability to reach others through the spoken or the written word. And the further away your job is from manual work, the larger the organization of which you are an employee, the more important it will be that you know how to convey your thoughts in writing or speaking. In the very large organization . . . this ability to express oneself is perhaps the most important of all the skills a person can possess.

request information, discuss problems, give instructions, work in teams, and interact with colleagues and clients" to achieve cooperation and team efficiency. To advance, you'll also need to be able to "think for yourself," "take initiative," and "solve problems."[3] On the managerial level, you'll find that communication skills are even more essential. In the words of an international business consultant, "nothing puts you in the 'poor leader' category more swiftly than inadequate communication skills."[4]

Unfortunately, businesses' need for employees with strong communication skills is all too often unfulfilled. When NFI Research asked senior executives and managers what areas of their companies they'd most like to see improved, they put "efficiency" and "communication" at the top of the list.[5] According to Solari Communications, "poor communication costs business millions of dollars every single day" in the form of wasted time, misunderstandings, eroded customer loyalty, and lost business.[6] SIS International Research found that poor communication is a problem for small and mid-sized businesses, not just for big corporations. Its data indicated that in 2009 a business with 100 employees spent an average downtime of 17 hours a week on clarifying its communications, which translated into an annual cost of $524,569.[7]

The communication shortcomings of employees and the importance of communication in business explain why you should work to improve your communication skills. Whatever position you have in business, your performance will be judged largely on the basis of your ability to communicate. If you perform and communicate well, you are likely to be rewarded with advancement. And the higher you advance, the more you will need your communication ability. The evidence is clear: Improving your communication skills improves your chances for success in business.

Why Business Depends upon Communication

Every business, even a one-person business, is actually an economic and social system. To produce and sell goods and services, any business must coordinate the activities of many groups of people: employees, suppliers, customers, legal advisors, community

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[3] Shirley Taylor, "Why Are Communication Skills Important?," *ST Training Solutions*, ST Training Solutions Pte Ltd, n.d., Web, 22 Apr. 2012.

[4] Jonathan Farrington, "The MOST Important Leadership Trait?—It's a 'No-Brainer,' " *Blogit*, Jonathan Farrington, 26 Sept. 2008, Web, 22 Apr. 2012.

[5] Chuck Martin, "NFI Research Result: Wish List," *Forbes.com*, Forbes.com, 4 Feb. 2010, Web, 22 Apr. 2012.

[6] Rich Maggiani, "The Costs of Poor Communication," *Solari*, Solari Communication, 2012, Web, 22 Apr. 2012.

[7] SIS International Research, "SMB Communications Pain Study White Paper: Uncovering the Hidden Cost of Communications Barriers and Latency," *SIS International Research*, SIS International Research, *Market Intelligence Journal*, 10 Mar. 2009, Web, 22 Apr. 2012.

representatives, and government agencies that might be involved. These connections are achieved through communication.

Consider, for example, the communications of a pharmaceutical manufacturer. Throughout the company, employees send and receive information about all aspects of the company's business:

- Salespeople receive instructions and information from the home office and submit orders and regular reports of their contact with customers.
- Executives use written and oral messages to conduct business with customers and other companies, manage company operations, and perform strategic planning.
- Production supervisors receive work orders, issue instructions, receive status reports, and submit production summaries.
- Shop floor supervisors deliver orders to the employees on the production line, communicate and enforce guidelines for safety and efficiency, troubleshoot problems that arise, and bring any concerns or suggestions to management.
- Marketing professionals gather market information, propose new directions for company production and sales efforts, coordinate with the research and development staff, and receive direction from the company's executives.
- Research specialists receive or propose problems to investigate, make detailed records of their research, monitor lab operations for compliance with government regulations, and communicate their findings to management.
- Public relations professionals use various media to build the company's brand and maintain the public's trust.

Numerous communication-related activities occur in every other niche of the company as well: finance and accounting, human resources, legal, information systems, and other departments. Everywhere, employees receive and send information as they conduct their work, and they may be doing so across or between continents as well as between buildings or offices.

Oral communication is a major part of this information flow. So, too, are various types of written communication—instant messaging, text messaging, online postings and comments, email, memos, letters, and reports, as well as forms and records.

All of this communicating goes on in business because communication is essential to the organized effort involved in business. Simply put, communication enables human beings to work together.

Current Challenges for Business Communicators

While communication has always been central to business, the nature of work today presents special communication challenges. Here we discuss four interrelated trends that are likely to influence how you will work and communicate.

The Need for Expanded Media Literacy. When email arrived on the scene in the late 1980s, it created something of a revolution. Instead of being restricted to letters, memos, and printed reports and proposals, business writers could now correspond electronically. As a result, many tasks formerly conducted via the "old" forms—memos in particular—were performed through email instead, and email replaced many phone and face-to-face conversations as well. Email has also had the effect of speeding up communication and of enabling a communicator to reach many more readers simultaneously. It has increased what we can achieve—and are expected to achieve—each day.

Email is still the most heavily used medium in business, but many other media have appeared on the scene. In addition to instant messaging and text messaging, businesses are now using blogs, tweets, podcasts, social networking, virtual meetings, videos, animation, simulations, and even online games. Collectively referred to as **new media**, these forms of communication and the mobile devices with which people access them are causing another revolution.

The impacts of this change are many and far reaching. It is easy now to network with others, even on the other side of the world, and to tap the intelligence of those outside the boundaries of the organization. Obviously, these "new ways for groups to come together and collaborate" will require that employees be "highly conversant with digital networking and virtual collaboration."[8] But new media are also increasing the need for employees who have **social intelligence**—the ability "to quickly assess the emotions of those around them and adapt their words, tone, and gestures accordingly."[9]

With information coming in so fast and from so many sources, organizations are becoming less hierarchical and more brain-like, with each employee acting as a kind of sensor. As a result, front-line employees now have a higher level of decision-making power than ever before.[10] Performing well in such an environment takes "novel and adaptive thinking,"[11] a willingness to "embrace change," and "fierce problem-solving skills."[12] The approach to business communication that this book takes will help you develop these strengths.

Increasing Globalism and Workplace Diversity. Countries and cultures continue to grow more interconnected as businesses expand their reach around the world. According to a panelist for a recent webinar on workplace trends, we are seeing "the emergence of the truly globally integrated enterprise," which means that the likelihood of working on a global team is increasing, as is the importance of "global social networks."[13]

Cross-cultural competency should thus be a part of your skillset.[14] You will need to be aware that your assumptions about business and communication are not shared by everyone everywhere. As the next chapter explains, businesspeople from other countries may have distinctly different attitudes about punctuality and efficiency. They can also differ from you in their preference, or lack thereof, for directness and the show of emotion. And the core features of their culture—such as their preference for individualism or collectivism, their religious beliefs, their political environment, their ideas about social hierarchy, and their attitudes toward work itself—can make their view of how to do business quite different from yours.

You will encounter other kinds of diversity as well. To have adequate retirement income, the so-called Baby Boomers—those born soon after World War II—are extending their careers. This means that organizations are likely to have employees in their twenties, in their sixties and seventies, and every age in between.[15] The influx of women into the workplace has meant increased gender diversity. And according to a diversity officer for a major health-care firm, each generation of U.S. workers has grown more ethnically diverse, with the so-called Generation Y cohort (those born after 1979) having the most ethnic diversity.[16] This trend is making organizations more innovative and productive,[17] and it means that "cultural agility" will need to figure into your workplace communications.[18]

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[8] David Bollier, *The Future of Work: What It Means for Individuals, Businesses, Markets and Governments*, 15, *The Aspen Institute*, Aspen Institute, 2011, Web, 22 Apr. 2012.

[9] Institute for the Future for Apollo Research Institute, *Future Work Skills 2020*, 8, *Apollo Research Institute*, Apollo Research Institute, 2011, Web, 22 Apr. 2012.

[10] Bollier 19.

[11] Institute for the Future for Apollo Research Institute, *Future of Work Report: Executive Summary*, 4, *Apollo Research Institute*, Apollo Research Institute, Mar. 2012, Web, 22 Apr. 2012.

[12] Bollier 22.

[13] Jim Keane, President, Steelcase Group, *Future of Work Webinar*, *Apollo Research Institute,* Apollo Research Institute, n.d., Web, 7 May 2012.

[14] Institute for the Future for Apollo Research Institute, *Future Work Skills 2020*, 9.

[15] According to Ross C. DeVol, chief research officer for the Milken Institute, one in five Americans will have hit 60 in 2030, and many of these will be staying in the workforce (*Future of Work Webinar*, *Apollo Research Institute*, Apollo Research Institute, n.d., Web, 7 May 2012).

[16] Katherine Haynes Sanstad, Regional Executive Director, Diversity, Kaiser Permanente, *Future of Work Webinar*, *Apollo Research Institute*, Apollo Research Institute, n.d., Web, 7 May 2012.

[17] Institute for the Future for Apollo Research Institute, *Future Work Skills 2020*, 9.

[18] Sanstad.

An Increased Need for Strong Analytical Skills. Adapting to a quickly changing business landscape requires being able to assess information quickly, focus on what's relevant, and interpret information reliably and usefully. As data-gathering devices are built into more objects, there will be more numerical data for us to process. The need for **computational thinking**—the ability "to interact with data, see patterns in data, make data-based decisions, and use data to design for desired outcomes"[19]—will increase. So will the need for **visual literacy**, the ability to create and interpret graphics.[20]

The value of **interpretive skills** extends beyond interpreting numbers. As we've pointed out, being able to understand other people is critical. As "smart machines" automate many workplace tasks, employees will spend more time on tasks that require "sense-making," or "the ability to determine the deeper meaning or significance of what is being expressed."[21] As one expert put it, "We've got to recognize that the real high-value work . . . may actually have an *imaginative* component."[22] This quality is required to discern the key facts, to explore "what if," and to choose the best solution—all central components of successful business communication.

An Increased Focus on Ethics and Social Responsibility One more widespread trend under way in business will likely affect the goals of the organization you work for: an increased focus on ethical and socially responsible behavior.

While ethical scandals have plagued businesses throughout modern history, the Enron and WorldCom scandals of 2002, in which false reports of financial health cheated employees and shareholders alike, seemed to usher in a new era of concern. That concern was well founded: With 2008 came unprecedented discoveries of mismanagement and fraud on the part of some of the United States's largest financial institutions. Accounts of predatory lending, business espionage, and exploitative labor

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[19] Institute for the Future for Apollo Research Institute, *Future Work Skills 2020*, 4.

[20] Institute for the Future for Apollo Research Institute, *Future Work Skills 2020*, 10.

[21] Institute for the Future for Apollo Research Institute, *Future Work Skills 2020*, 8.

[22] Bollier 8.

Nongovermental organizations (NGOs) such as CorpWatch attest to the growing importance of social responsibility in business.

SOURCE: CorpWatch, Home page, CorpWatch, n.d., Web, 30 Apr. 2012. From http://www.corpwatch.org.

practices continue to shake the public's confidence in business. On a moral level, doing business in a way that harms others is wrong. On a practical level, doing so undermines trust, which is critical to the success of business. The more an organization builds trust among its employees, its shareholders, its business partners, and its community, the better for the business and for economic prosperity overall. A key way to build trust is through respectful, honest communication backed up by quality goods and services.

Lately, another important dimension of business ethics has developed: **corporate social responsibility**. The Internet has brought a new transparency to companies' business practices, with negative information traveling quickly and widely. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as CorpWatch, Consumer Federation of America, and Greenpeace can exert a powerful influence on public opinion and even on governments. Businesses now operate in an age of social accountability, and their response has been the development of corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments and initiatives. While the business benefits of CSR have been debated, the public demand for such programs is strong. You may well find that social issues will influence how you do business and communicate in business.

LO3 Describe the three main categories of business communication.

Main Categories of Business Communication

Such newer media as blogs and social networking have weakened the boundary between "inside" and "outside" the organization. One post on a company's blog, for example, could draw comments from employees, from employees in a similar organization or industry, or from potential customers.

Even so, most communication on the job can still be categorized as either internal operational, external operational, or personal. These categories, while not completely distinct, can help you understand your purposes for communicating.

Internal-Operational Communication. All the communication that occurs in conducting work within a business is internal operational. This is the communication among the business's employees that is done to perform the work of the business and track its success.

SOURCE: © Randy Glasbergen/ glasbergen.com

Internal-operational communication takes many forms. It includes the ongoing discussions that senior management undertakes to determine the goals and processes of the business. It includes the orders and instructions that supervisors give employees, as well as written and oral exchanges among employees about work matters. It includes reports that employees prepare concerning sales, production, inventories, finance, maintenance, and so on. It includes the messages that they write and speak in carrying out their assignments and contributing their ideas to the business.

Much of this internal-operational communication is performed on computer networks. Employees send email, chat online, and post information on company portals and blogs for others throughout the business, whether located down the hall, across the street, or in other countries. And today, much of this communication takes place via smartphones and other mobile devices.

External-Operational Communication. The work-related communicating that a business does with people and groups outside the business is **external-operational communication**. This is the business's communication with its publics—suppliers, service companies, customers, government agencies, the general public, and others.

External-operational communication includes all of the business's efforts at selling—from sales letters, emails, and phone calls to Web and television ads, trade-show displays, the company website, and customer visits. Also in this category is all that a business does to gain positive publicity, such as promoting its community-service activities, preparing appealing materials for current and prospective investors, writing press releases for the media, and contributing expert insights at professional meetings and on webinars. In fact, every act of communication with an external audience can be regarded as a public-relations message, conveying a certain image of the company. For this reason, all such acts should be undertaken with careful attention to both content and tone.

The importance of these kinds of external-operational communication hardly needs explaining. Because the success of a business depends on its ability to attract and satisfy customers, it must communicate effectively with those customers.

SOURCE: Reprinted with permission.

Callout labels (top to bottom):
- Search option in header
- Banner linking to company tools / services
- 4 top stories rotate with headline and lead-in, refreshed every 2–3 days or as warranted
- All other articles appear in list with title and lead-in, comment count and rating.
- Option to sort by theme, most recent, highest rated, etc...
- Featured videos / content
- Site "how to" areas
- Links to company social media
- Stock ticker linked with external provider

Companies often use carefully designed portals or intranets, such as this one at Procter & Gamble, to communicate with employees and enable them to communicate with each other.

But businesses also depend on one another in the production and distribution of goods and services. Coordinating with contractors, consultants, and suppliers requires skillful communication. In addition, every business must communicate to some extent with a variety of other external parties, such as government agencies and public-interest groups. Some external audiences for today's businesses are illustrated in Figure 1–1. Like internal communication, external communication is vital to business success.

Personal Communication. Not all the communication that occurs in business is operational. In fact, much of it is without apparent purpose as far as the operating plan of the business is concerned. This type of communication is personal. Do not make the mistake of underestimating its importance. **Personal communication** helps make and sustain the relationships upon which business depends, and it is more important than ever.

Personal communication is the exchange of information and feelings in which we human beings engage whenever we come together—or when we just feel like talking to each other. We are social animals, and we will communicate even when we have little or nothing to say. Although not an official part of the business's operations, personal communication can have a significant effect on their success. This effect is a result of
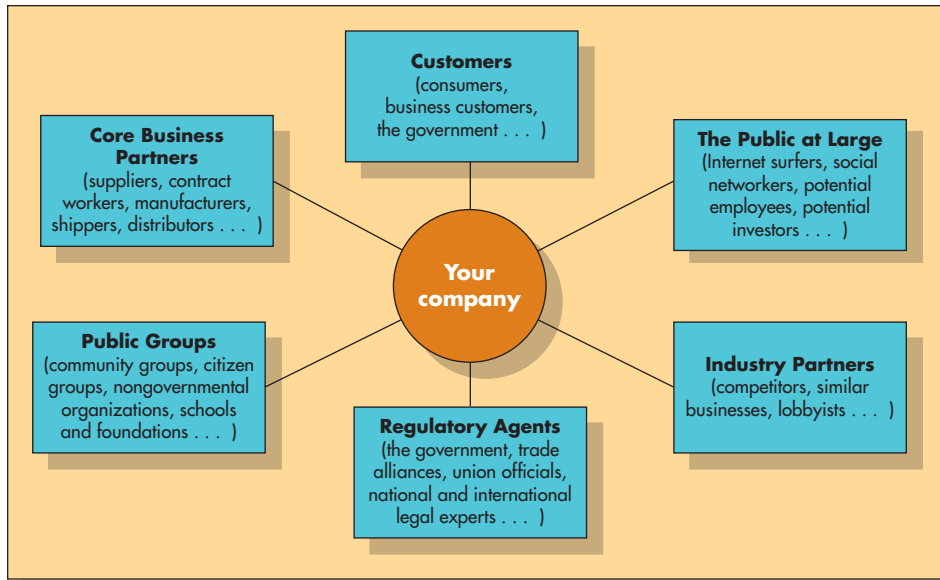
Figure 1–1

Likely External Audiences for Today's Businesses

the influence that personal communication can have on the attitudes of the employees and those with whom they communicate.

The employees' attitudes toward the business, one another, and their assignments directly affect their productivity. The nature and amount of personal talk at work affect those attitudes. In an environment where heated words and flaming tempers are often present, the employees are not likely to give their best efforts to their jobs. Likewise, a rollicking, jovial workplace can undermine business goals. Wise managers cultivate the optimum balance between employees' focus on job-related tasks and their freedom to engage with others on a personal level. Chat around the water cooler or in the break room encourages a team attitude and can often be the medium in which actual business issues get discussed. Even communication that is largely internal-operational will often
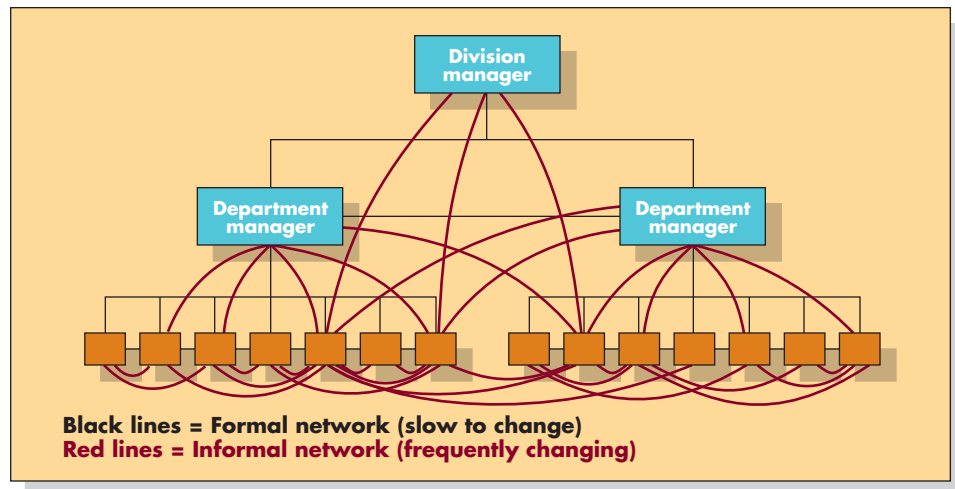

Personal communication in business is both inevitable and important.

Division manager

Department manager

Department manager

Black lines = Formal network (slow to change)
Red lines = Informal network (frequently changing)

include personal elements that relieve the tedium of daily routine and enable employees to build personal relationships.

Similarly, communication with external parties will naturally include personal remarks at some point. Sometimes you may find yourself writing a wholly personal message to a client, as when he or she has won a major award or experienced a loss of some kind. Other times, you may compose an external-operational message that also includes a brief personal note, perhaps thanking a client for a pleasant lunch or referring to a personal matter that came up in the course of a business meeting.

Using both online and face-to-face networking, you will also cultivate business-related friends. Your relationships with these contacts will not only help you do your current job; they will also be an important resource as you change jobs or even careers. Research shows that "the idea of the steady, permanent job is becoming a relic of another era."[23] Employees are now taking "an entrepreneurial approach" to their lives and skills, considering carefully where to work, what work to do, how much to work, and for how long.[24] The personal connections you make in your current employment will contribute to your future success.

LO4 Describe the formal and informal communication networks of the business organization.

Communication Networks of the Organization

Looking over all of a business's communication (internal, external, and personal), we see an extremely complex system of information flow and human interaction. We see dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of individuals engaging in untold numbers of communication events throughout each workday.

In fact, as Figure 1–2 shows, there are two complex networks of information in virtually any organization—one formal and one informal. Both are critical to the success of the business.

The Formal Network. In simplified form, information flow in a modern business is much like the network of arteries and veins in the body. Just as the body has blood vessels, the business has major, well-established channels for information exchange. This is the **formal network**—the main lines of operational communication. Through these channels flows the bulk of the communication that the business needs to operate. Specifically, the flow includes the upward, lateral, and downward movement of information in the form of reports, memos, email, and other media within the organization; the downward movement of orders, instructions, advisories, and announcements; and the broad dissemination of company information through the organization's newsletter, bulletin boards, email, intranet, or blogs.

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[23] Bollier 3.

[24] Institute for the Future for Apollo Research Institute, *Future of Work Report* 6.

As we have seen, information routinely flows outward as well. Order acknowledgments, invoices, receipts, correspondence with suppliers and consultants, and other standard external-operational communications can make external audiences part of the formal communication network.

These officially sanctioned lines of communication cause certain forms of communication, or **genres**, to exist within the organization. For example, it may be customary in one company for project leaders to require a weekly report from team members. In another company, the executives may hold monthly staff meetings. Whatever the established form, it will bring with it certain expectations about what can and cannot be said, who may and may not say it, and how the messages should be structured and worded. You will need to understand these expectations in order to use the approved lines of communication to get things done.

The Informal Network. Operating alongside the formal network is the **informal network**. It comprises the thousands upon thousands of personal communications that may or may not support the formal communication network of a business. Such communications follow no set pattern; they form an ever-changing and infinitely complex structure linking the members of the organization to each other and to many different external audiences.

The complexity of this informal network, especially in larger organizations, cannot be overemphasized. Typically, it is really not a single network but a complex relationship of smaller networks consisting of certain groups of people. The relationship is made even more complex by the fact that these people may belong to more than one group and that group memberships and the links between groups are continually changing. The department you belong to, the other employees with whom you come in contact in the course of your workday, and the many connections you make with those outside your organization can cause links in this network to form.

The informal network inside an organization is often referred to as the **grapevine**. This communication network is more valuable to the company's operations than a first impression might indicate. Certainly, it carries much gossip and rumor. Even so, the grapevine usually carries far more information than the formal communication system, and on many matters it is more effective in determining the course of an organization. Skillful managers recognize the presence of the grapevine, and they know that the powerful people in this network are often not those at the top of the

formal organizational hierarchy. They find out who the talk leaders are and give them the information that will do the most good for the organization. They also make management decisions that will cultivate positive talk.

Employees' personal relations with external audiences add another dimension to a company's informal network. The widespread use of social media has dramatically increased employees' informal communication with outsiders. Such communication can either help or hurt the company. Here again, wise managers will be sensitive to the informal network and manage in such a way as to encourage talk that is beneficial to the company.

As an employee, you need to be careful about how you participate in the informal network. Unwise remarks can get you known as a troublemaker and even get you fired, whereas representing yourself and your company well can result not only in more pleasant relations but also in professional success.

LO5 Describe factors that affect the types and amount of communicating that a business does.

Variation in Communication Activity by Business

Just how much and what kind of communicating a business does depends on several factors. The nature of the business is one. For example, insurance companies have a great need to communicate with their customers, especially through letters and other mailings, whereas housecleaning service companies have little such need. Another factor is the business's size and complexity. Relatively simple businesses, such as repair services, require far less communication than complex businesses, such as automobile manufacturers.

The business's relation to its environment also influences its communication practices. Businesses in a comparatively stable environment, such as textile manufacturing or food processing, will tend to depend on established types of formal communication in a set organizational hierarchy, whereas those in a volatile environment, such as software development or online commerce, will tend to improvise more in terms of their communications and company structure.

Yet another factor is the geographic dispersion of the operations of a business. Obviously, internal communication in a business with multiple locations differs from that of a one-location business. Enabling employees to work from home, requiring them to travel, or relying on outside contractors can also increase a company's geographical reach and thus affect its communication. Related to this factor is how culturally diverse the company is. The communication of a multicultural organization will require more adaptation to participants' values, perspectives, and language skills than that of a relatively homogeneous organization.

Each business can also be said to possess a certain **organizational culture**, which has a strong effect upon, and is strongly affected by, the company's communication. The concept of organizational or corporate culture was popularized in the early 1980s, and it continues to be a central focus of management consultants and theorists.[25] You can think of a given company's culture as its customary, but often unstated, ways of perceiving and doing things. It is the medium of preferred values and practices in which the company's members do their work.

Recall places you've worked or businesses you've patronized. In some, the employees' demeanor suggests a coherent, healthy culture in which people seem to know what to do and be happy doing it. At the other extreme are companies where employees exhibit little affiliation with the business and may even be sabotaging it through poor customer service or lack of knowledge about their jobs. The content and quality of the company's communication have a great deal to do with employees' attitudes and behavior.

Take care to note that the official culture and the actual culture in a company are not necessarily the same. Officially, the company management may announce and try

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[25] See Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership,* 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), print, which reviews the literature on this important concept.

to promote a certain culture through formal communications such as mission statements and mottoes. But the actual culture of a company is a dynamic, living realm of meaning constructed daily through infinite behaviors and communications at all levels of the company. Having your antennae out for the assumptions that actually drive people's conduct in your or your client's workplace will help you become a more effective communicator.

THE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION PROCESS

While business communication involves many different skills, from verbal and visual literacy to technological know-how, none are more important than problem-solving skills and people skills. These are central to the business communication process.

Business Communication as Problem Solving

Virtually every significant communication task that you will face will involve analyzing a unique set of factors that requires at least a somewhat unique solution. For this reason, it makes sense to think of business communication as **problem solving**.

Researchers in many fields—management, medicine, writing, psychology, and others—have studied problem solving. In general, they define *problem* as a gap between where you are now and where you want to be.[26] Within this framework, a problem isn't always something negative; it can also be an opportunity to improve a situation or do things in a better way. As a goal-focused enterprise, business is all about solving problems, and so, therefore, is business communication.

The problem-solving literature divides problems into two main types: *well defined* and *ill defined.* The former can be solved by following a formula, such as when you are computing how much money is left in your department's budget. But most real-world problems, including business communication problems, cannot be solved this way. They do not come to us in neat packages with the path to the best solution clearly implied. Instead, they require research, analysis, creativity, and judgment. One reason why this is the case in business communication is that, as in any communication situation, people are involved—and people are both complex and unique. But the business context itself is often complex, presenting you with multiple options for handling any given situation. For example, if a customer has complained, what will you do about it? Nothing? Apologize? Imply that the customer was at fault? Give a conciliatory discount? Refuse to adjust the bill? Even a "simple" problem like this one requires thinking through the likely short- and long-term effects of several possible solutions.

Solving ill-defined problems involves combining existing resources with innovation and good judgment. Although this book presents basic plans for several common types of business communication messages, you will not be able to solve particular communication problems by just filling in the blanks of these plans. The plans can be thought of as **heuristics**—"rules of thumb" that keep you from reinventing the wheel with each new problem. But the plans do not tell you all you need to do to solve each unique communication problem. You must decide how to adapt each plan to the given situation.

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[26] For discussions of problem solving, see the following print resources: John R. Hayes, *The Complete Problem Solver,* 2nd ed. (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1989); Morgan D. Jones, *The Thinker's Toolkit* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998); Janet E. Davidson and Robert J. Sternberg, eds., *The Psychology of Problem Solving* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Dan Roam, *The Back of the Napkin* (London: Portfolio, 2008); John Adair, *Decision Making and Problem Solving Strategies*, 2nd ed. (London: Kogan Page, 2010).

What this means is that successful business communication is both more challenging and more exciting than you may have thought. You will need to draw on your own powers of interpretation and decision making to succeed with your human communication partners.

Of course, people will handle communication tasks somewhat differently depending on who they are, how they interpret the situation, and who they imagine their recipients to be. Does this mean that all communication solutions are equally valid? Not at all. While there is no perfect solution, there can be many bad ones that have been developed without enough analysis and effort. Focused thinking, research, and planning will not guarantee success in the shifting, complex world of business communication, but they will make your chances of success as high as possible. The next section will help you perform this kind of analysis.

A Model of Business Communication

Figure 1–3 shows the basic elements of a business communication event. Even though people can, and often do, communicate inadvertently, this communication model focuses on what happens when someone deliberately communicates with someone else to achieve particular business-related goals.
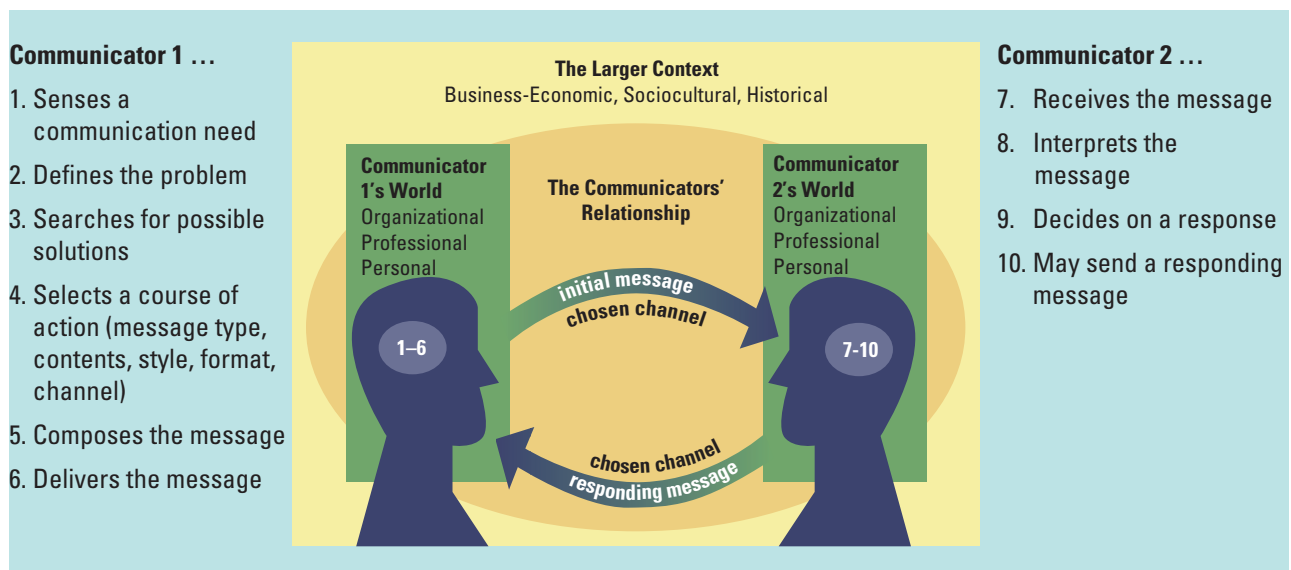
You'll notice that the two communicators in the figure are labeled simply Communicator 1 and Communicator 2 instead of Sender and Receiver or Communicator and Audience. Certainly any communication event begins with someone deciding that communication is needed and initiating that communication, with an intended recipient on the other end. But in many situations, especially those involving real-time conversation, the two parties work together to reach a mutual understanding. Even in situations where a communicator is attempting to deliver a complete, carefully prepared message—as in a letter, report, or oral presentation—the intended recipients have already participated in the construction of the message because the writer or presenter has kept them in mind when composing and designing the message. The labels in this model are thus intended to convey the cooperative effort behind every successful communication event.

LO7 Describe the various contexts for each act of business communication.

The Contexts for Communication. Certain features of the communication situation are already in place as the communicators in our model begin to communicate.

The Business Communication Process

Communicator 1 …

1. Senses a communication need
2. Defines the problem
3. Searches for possible solutions
4. Selects a course of action (message type, contents, style, format, channel)
5. Composes the message
6. Delivers the message

The Larger Context
Business-Economic, Sociocultural, Historical

Communicator 1's World
Organizational
Professional
Personal

The Communicators' Relationship

Communicator 2's World
Organizational
Professional
Personal

initial message
chosen channel

1–6

7-10

chosen channel
responding message

Communicator 2 …

7. Receives the message
8. Interprets the message
9. Decides on a response
10. May send a responding message

The *larger context* includes the general business-economic climate; the language, values, and customs in the surrounding culture; and the historical moment in which the communication is taking place.

Think about how these contexts might influence communication. For example, when the country's economy or a particular industry is flourishing, a communicator's message and the recipient's response may well be different from what they would be during an economic slump. The sociocultural context also affects how individuals communicate. Whether they are communicating in the context of U.S. urban culture, for instance, or the culture of a particular region or another country, or whether they are communicating across cultures, their communication choices will be affected. The particular historical context of their communication can also be a factor. Consider how recent financial scandals in the United States or the increased focus on the environment are influencing the language of business. The skillful communicator is sensitive to these larger contexts, which always exert an influence and, to some extent, are always changing.

The **relationship of the communicators** also forms an important context for communication. Certainly, communication is about moving information from point A to point B, but it is also about interaction between human beings. Your first correspondence with someone begins a relationship between the two of you, whether as individuals, people in certain business roles, or both. All future messages between you will continue to build this relationship.

The communicators' *particular contexts* exert perhaps the strongest influence on the act of communication. These interrelated contexts can be

- **Organizational contexts**. As we've discussed, the type and culture of the organization you represent will shape your communication choices in many ways, and the organizational contexts of your audiences will, in turn, shape their responses. In fact, in every act of business communication, at least one of the parties involved is likely to be representing an organization. What you communicate and how you do so will be strongly shaped by the organization for whom you speak. In turn, the organization to which your audience belongs—its priorities, its current circumstances, even how fast or slow its pace of work—can strongly influence the way your message is received.

- **Professional contexts**. You know from school and experience that different professionals—whether physicians, social workers, managers, accountants, or those involved in other fields—possess different kinds of expertise, speak differently, and have different perspectives. What gets communicated and how can be heavily influenced by the communicators' professional roles. Be aware that internal audiences as well as external ones can occupy different professional roles and therefore favor different kinds of content and language. Employees in management and engineering, for example, have been demonstrated to have quite different priorities, with the former focusing on financial benefit and the latter on technological achievement.[27] Part of successful communication is being alert to your audiences' different professional contexts.

- **Personal contexts**. Who you are as a person comes from many sources: the genes you inherited, your family and upbringing, your life experiences, your schooling, the many people with whom you've come in contact, and the culture in which you were reared. Who you are as a person also depends to some extent on your current circumstances. Successes and failures, current relationships, financial ups and downs, the state of your health, your physical environment—all can affect a particular communicative act. Since much business communication is between individuals occupying organizational roles, personal matters are usually not disclosed. But it is well to keep in mind the effect that these can have on the communicators. If you're

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[27] See research by Dorothy A. Winsor, especially *Writing Power: Communication in an Engineering Center* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), print.

aware, for example, that the intended recipient of your message is under stress or having a bad day, you can adapt your communication accordingly.

The Process of Communication. No one can know exactly what occurs inside the minds of communicators when they undertake to create a message, but researchers generally agree that the process includes the following steps:

1. *Sensing a communication need.* A problem has come to your attention, or you have an idea about how to achieve a certain goal. Perhaps someone has written an email of complaint and you must answer it, or perhaps you've noticed that the company could benefit from automating a certain procedure. Whatever the case, you find that an action is in order, and you believe that some form of communication will help you achieve the desired state.

2. *Defining the situation.* To create a successful message or plan a communication event, you need to have a well-informed sense of the situation. For example, if you have received a letter of complaint from a customer, what exactly is the problem here? Does the customer have a legitimate point? What further information might you need to acquire in order to understand the situation? In what ways is this problem like or unlike others you have solved? How might your or your organization's goals be hindered or helped depending on your communication choices?

3. *Considering possible communication strategies.* As your definition of the situation takes shape, you will start considering different options for solving it. What kind of communication event will you initiate, and what will you want to achieve with it? What image of yourself, your company, and your communication partners might you project in your message? To generate a good solution, you will need to think about and research your potential audiences and their contexts, your own goals and contexts, your relationship with each audience, and any relevant larger contexts.

4. *Selecting a course of action.* Considering the situation as you've defined it and looking at your communication options, you will consider the potential costs and benefits of each option and select the optimum one. Your decision will include preliminary choices about the message type, contents, structure, verbal style, and visual format, and about the channel you will use to deliver the message.

5. *Composing the message.* Here is where you either craft your written message or plan your presentation or conversation. If you have decided to convey your message orally, you will make careful notes or perhaps even write out your whole message and also design any visuals you need. If you have decided to write your message, you will draft it and then revise it carefully so that it will get the job done and reflect well on you (see Chapter 6 for helpful writing and revising techniques).

6. *Sending the message.* When your message is prepared or carefully planned, you are ready to deliver it to your intended recipients in the channel you have chosen. You choose a good time to deliver it, realizing, for example, that Monday morning may not be the best time to make an important phone call to a busy executive. You also consider sending auxiliary messages, such as a "heads-up" phone call or email, that could increase your main message's chances of success. You want to do all you can to ensure that your message doesn't get lost amidst all the other stimuli competing for your intended audience's attention.

While these activities tend to form a linear pattern, the communicator often needs to revisit earlier steps while moving through the different activities. In other words, solving a communication problem can be a **recursive** process. This is particularly true for situations that have many possible solutions or heavily involve the audience in the communication process. A communicator may begin a communication event with a certain view of the situation and then find, upon further analysis or the discovery of

Channel Choice Affects Message Success

"Its official, you no longer work for JNI Traffic Control and u have forfided any arrangements made." Can you imagine getting such a text message? The Sydney employer was sued over this inappropriate choice of a communication channel for firing an employee. In settling the matter the commissioner went further in stating that email, text messages, and even answering machines were inappropriate for official business communication. Or what about being notified by text message of an overdue bill? While some might think of that as a service, others would regard it as invasive and inappropriate.

Historically, the importance of channel choice has been disputed, with some arguing that it is simply a means for transmitting words and others arguing that the chosen channel is, in itself, a message. However, today most people realize that the appropriate choice of communication channel contributes significantly, along with the words, to the success of the message. While research has provided guidelines for understanding when to use very lean (printed material) to very rich (face-to-face) channels, new technologies and laws have added new elements to consider. Not only are there no clear-cut rules or guidelines, but the smallest change in context may make one choice better than another.

In selecting a channel, a communicator needs to weigh several factors. These include the message content, the communicators' levels of competency with the channel, the recipient's access to the channel, and the assumptions associated with the channel. Appropriate choice of a communication channel helps people communicate clearly, improving both their productivity and personal relationships.

additional facts, that this view needs to be revised in order to accommodate all the involved parties and their goals.

If all goes as planned, here is what will happen on the recipient's end:

7. *Receiving the message.* Your chosen channel has delivered your message to each intended recipient, who has perceived and decided to read or listen to your message.

8. *Interpreting the message.* Just as you had to interpret the situation that prompted your communication, your recipient now has to interpret the message you sent. This activity will involve not only extracting information from the message but also guessing your communication purpose, forming judgments about you and those you represent, and picking up on cues about the relationship you want to promote between yourself and the recipient. If you have anticipated the recipient's particular contexts and interests successfully, he or she will form the impressions that you intended. The recipient may prompt the initiating communicator for help with this interpretive act, especially if the communication is a live conversation.

9. *Deciding on a response.* Any time you send a message, you hope for a certain response from your recipient, whether it be increased goodwill, increased knowledge, a specific responding action, or a combination of these. If your message has been carefully adapted to the recipient, it has a good chance of achieving the desired response.

10. *Replying to the message.* The recipient's response to your message will often take the form of replying to your message. When this is the case, the receiver is acting as communicator, following the process that you followed to generate your message.

Figure 1–4 lists the main questions to consider when developing a communication strategy. Taking this analytical approach will help you think consciously about each stage of the process and give you the best chance of achieving the desired results.

What is the situation?

- What has happened to make you think you need to communicate?
- What background and prior knowledge can you apply to this situation? How is this situation like or unlike others you have encountered?
- What do you need to find out in order to understand every facet of this situation? Where can you get this information?

What are some possible communication strategies?

- To whom might you communicate? Who might be your primary and secondary audiences? What are their different organizational, professional, and personal contexts? What would each care about or want to know? What, if any, is your prior relationship with them?
- What purpose might you want to achieve with each recipient? What are your organizational, professional, and personal contexts?
- What are some communication strategies that might help you achieve your goals?
- How might the larger business-economic, sociocultural, and historical contexts affect the success of different strategies?

Which is the best course of action?

- Which strategies are impractical, incomplete, or potentially dangerous? Why?
- Which of the remaining strategies looks like the optimum one? Why?
- What will be the best message type, contents, structure, style, and format for your message?
- What channel will you use to deliver it?

What is the best way to design the chosen message?

- Given your goals for each recipient, what information should your message include?
- What logical structure (ordering and grouping of information) should you use?
- What kind of style should you use? How formal or informal should you be? What kinds of associations should your language have? What image of yourself and your audience should you try to project? What kind of relationship with each recipient should your message promote?
- How can you use formatting, graphics, and/or supporting media to make your message easier to comprehend?
- What are your recipients' expectations for the channel you've chosen?

What is the best way to deliver the message?

- Are there any timing considerations related to delivering your message?
- Should you combine the main message with any other messages?
- How can you best ensure that each intended recipient receives and reads or hears your message?

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: THE BOTTOM LINE

The theme of this chapter might be summed up this way: The goal of business communication is to create a shared understanding of business situations that will enable people to work successfully together.

Timely and clear transfer of information is critical to businesses, now more than ever. But figuring out what kind of information to send, whom to send it to, how to send it, and what form to use requires good decision making. Since every person has his or her own mental "filters"—preconceptions, frames of reference, and verbal worlds—wording the information so that it will be understood can be a challenge. You and your audience may even attach completely different meanings to the same words (a problem that the communication literature calls "bypassing").

Complicating this picture is the fact that communication is not just about information transfer. The creation and maintenance of positive human relations is also essential to business and thus to business communication. Every act of communication conveys

an image of you and of the way you regard those to whom you're speaking or writing. Successful business communicators pay careful attention to the human relations dimension of their messages.

Yes, business communication can be challenging. It can also be extremely rewarding because of the results you achieve and the relationships you build. The advice, examples, and exercises in this book will jump-start you toward success. But it will be your ability to analyze and solve specific communication problems that will take you the rest of the way there.

THERE'S MORE . . .

What codes of ethics do major companies and professional organizations use? What are 10 qualities of an effective team member? How can you become a better problem solver? Scan the QR code with your smartphone or use your Web browser to find out at www.mhhe.com/lesikar13e. Choose Chapter 1 > Bizcom Tools & Tips.

SUMMARY BY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Because communication is vital to business operations, businesses need and reward people who can communicate.
   - But good communicators are scarce.
   - So, if you can improve your communication skills, you increase your value to business and advance your own career as well.

   1 Explain the importance of communication to you and to business.

2. Today's business communicators face special challenges:
   - The need for expanded media literacy.
   - Increasing globalism and workplace diversity.
   - An increased need for strong analytical and interpretive skills.
   - An increased focus on ethics and social responsibility.

   2 Describe the main challenges facing business communicators today.

3. Communicating in business falls into three main categories:
   - Internal-operational communication is the communication inside a business that enables the business to perform its work and track its success.
   - External-operational communication is the communicating a business does with outsiders (customers, other businesses, the public, government agencies, and others).
   - Personal communication consists of informal exchanges of information not formally related to operations but nevertheless important to an organization's success.

   3 Describe the three main categories of business communication.

4. The flow of communication in a business organization forms a complex and ever-changing network.
   - The communicating that follows the formal structure of the business comprises the formal network. Operational information flows upward, downward, and laterally through this network, which is sustained by established forms of communication (genres).
   - The flow of personal communication forms the informal network. The internal version of this network is known as the grapevine. But the use of social media is including more outsiders in companies' informal networks.

   4 Describe the formal and informal communication networks of the business organization.

5. The kind and amount of communicating a business does depend upon such factors as
   - The nature of the business.
   - Its size and complexity.
   - Its environment.
   - The geographic dispersion of its members.

   5 Describe factors that affect the types and amount of communicating that a business does.

- Its degree of cultural diversity.
- Its organizational culture (an organization's customary, often unstated, ways of perceiving and doing things).

6. Business communication can be thought of as a problem-solving activity.
   - Finding communication solutions requires analysis, creativity, and judgment.
   - Heuristics (problem-solving devices such as common communication plans) can help make your communication problem solving more efficient.
   - The common communication plans must still be adapted to each situation.
   - While there is no one perfect solution, a poorly prepared one is likely to fail.

7. Business communication takes place in these contexts:
   - The larger business-economic, sociocultural, and historical contexts.
   - The relationship of the communicators.
   - The communicators' own worlds: organizational, professional, and personal.

8. The process of communication involves these activities, which tend to be linear in nature but are often recursive (require revisiting earlier steps):

   The initiator
   - Senses a communication need.
   - Defines the situation.
   - Considers possible communication strategies.
   - Selects a course of action (message type, contents, style, format, channel).
   - Composes the message.
   - Sends the message.

   The intended recipient
   - Receives the message.
   - Interprets the message.
   - Decides on a response.
   - May send a responding message.

KEY TERMS

new media, 5

social intelligence, 6

cross-cultural competency, 6

computational thinking, 7

visual literacy, 7

interpretive skills, 7

corporate social responsibility, 8

internal-operational communication, 9

external-operational communication, 9

personal communication, 10

formal network, 12

genres, 13

informal network, 13

grapevine, 13

organizational culture, 14

problem solving, 15

heuristics, 15

relationship of the communicators, 17

organizational contexts, 17

professional contexts, 17

personal contexts, 17

recursive, 18

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1 "If there's no definitive solution, then all ways of handling a business communication problem are equally good." Using the discussion of business communication problem solving in this chapter, explain why this statement is false. **LO6**

2 To get a feel for how rapidly information technologies are changing and how significant the impact is on business, list all the information technologies (devices and applications) that you've learned to use over the last five years. Now reflect on how your communication,

work, and life have changed as a result of these technologies. **LO2**

3 "People need to leave their cultures and values at the door when they come to work and just do business." Discuss the possible merits and flaws of this attitude. **LO2**

4 In what ways is imagination important in business? In business communication? **LO2**

5 Times are hard for Robo Solutions, a small local company that creates assembly-line robotics. Lately, the clients have been few and far between. But today the sales staff got encouraging news: James Pritchett, president of a nearby tool and die company, has inquired about the possibility of the company's designing a series of computer-run robots for key processes in the plant. There's a hitch, though; it's Sara McCann's turn to try to snare his business (and the commission)—and Pritchett is known to prefer dealing with men. Do you, as Robo Solutions sales manager, send Sarah anyway, or do you send one of your male salespeople to get Pritchett's business, giving Sarah a shot at the next potential client? How would you solve this communication—and ethics—problem? **LO2**

6 "Never mix business with personal matters—it just leads to damaged relationships, poor business decisions, or both." In what ways might this be a fair statement? In what ways is it unwise advice? **LO3**

7 List the types of companies requiring many kinds of communication. Then make a list of types of companies requiring few kinds. What explains the difference between these two groups' amount and types of communication? **LO5**

8 In *Images of Organization,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997), management scholar Gareth Morgan has analyzed companies using various metaphors. For example, he has looked at those elements of a company that make it appear to run like a machine (with rigidly organized, specific job roles), an organism (with elements that make it dependent upon and responsive to its environment), a brain (with self-managing teams and employees who can do a variety of jobs as needed), and a political system (with employees vying for power and influence). Think of an organization you know well and decide upon its dominant cultural metaphor. Is it one of Morgan's? Or is it a family? A team? A community? A prison? A mixture of several kinds? Once you settle on your metaphor, be prepared to explain how this organization's culture affects, and is affected by, its communication practices. **LO5**

9 As noted in this chapter, companies develop specific forms of communication, or genres, that enable them to get their work done. In a place where you have worked or another organization in which you have been a member, what were the main forms of communication with the employees or members? To what extent were these uniquely adapted to the needs of the organization? **LO5**

10 Using this chapter's discussion of communication, explain how people reading or hearing the same message can disagree on its meaning. **LO7**

SKILLS BUILDING EXERCISES

1 Using the Internet, find a company that has a corporate social responsibility program and study what the company's website says about that program. What kind of image as a corporate citizen is the company trying to project, and how? How convincing is this effort, in your opinion, and why? **LO2**

2 Choose a certain national or regional culture, ethnicity, or generation—one different from your own—and find out what values the people in this demographic are generally known for. How might working or doing business with a person from one of these groups require you to adapt your own values and communication style? **LO2**

3 List the types of external-operational and internal-operational communication that occur in an organization with which you are familiar (school, fraternity, church, etc.). **LO3**

4 Describe the formal network of communication in an organization, division, or department with which you are familiar (preferably a simple one). Discuss why you think the communication network has taken this form and how successfully it seems to meet the business's needs. **LO4**

5 Find two websites of companies in the same industry—for example, two manufacturers of household products or two wireless service providers. Using the evidence presented on their websites, compare their company cultures. Look at their stated mission (if any), their history (if provided), the gender and qualifications of their personnel (if given), their employee benefits, their information for job applicants, their information for investors, the company image projected by the visual elements on the site—anything that suggests who they are or want you to think they are. Write up your comparison in a well-organized, well-supported message to your instructor. **LO5**

6 Megan Cabot is one of 12 workers in Department X. She has strong leadership qualities, and all her co-workers look up to her. She dominates conversations with them and expresses strong viewpoints on most matters. Although she is a good worker, her dominating personality has caused problems for you, the new manager of Department X.

Today you directed your subordinates to change a certain work procedure. The change is one that has proven superior in the past whenever it has been tried. Soon after giving the directive, you noticed the workers talking in a group, with Megan the obvious leader. In a few minutes she appeared in your office. "We've thought it over," she said. "Your production change won't work." Explain what is happening. How will you handle this situation? **LO4, LO6**

7 After noticing that some workers were starting work late and finishing early, a department head wrote this message to subordinates:

It is apparent that many of you are not giving the company a full day's work. Thus, the following procedures are implemented immediately:

a. After you clock in, you will proceed to your workstations and will be ready to begin work promptly at the start of the work period.

b. You will not take a coffee break or consume coffee on the job at the beginning of the work period. You will wait until your designated break times.

c. You will not participate in social gatherings at any time during the workday except during designated break periods.

d. You will terminate work activities no earlier than 10 minutes prior to the end of the work period. You will use the 10 minutes to put up equipment, clean equipment, and police the work area.

The message was not well received by the workers. In fact, it led to considerable anger and confusion. Using the discussion of communication planning in this chapter, explain where the department head's problem-solving process went awry. What did he or she fail to take into account? **LO6–LO8**

8 Think of a recent transaction you had with a business-person or with a staff person at your school. Describe the contexts of your communication, from the larger contexts (business-economic, sociocultural, or historical) to the personal (to the extent you know them). How did these influence the outcome of your communication? **LO7**

9 Find an article in the business press or general news about a recent incident involving a company—for example, a merger or acquisition, a scandal or crisis, or the launching of a new product. What kind of communication challenges might this event have posed for the company, both internally and externally? What kinds of messages probably needed to be written, and to whom? **LO1–LO7**