

PREFACE

A lot has changed in the three years since the 12th edition of *Lesikar's Business Communication: Connecting in a Digital World* was published. Twitter and tablets have now become key players on the technology scene, along with Facebook, email marketing, smartphones, and cloud applications. The economies of the United States and many other countries have settled into a recession, creating a tougher job market and changing business and consumer needs. The presence of Gen Yers in the workplace has increased, while Baby Boomers are prolonging their retirement. The boundaries between cultures and countries have become more permeable, making the business world “flatter” and workplaces more diverse. And there's more information overload, making incisive analysis, lucid presentation of data, and development of targeted persuasive strategies more critical.

These changes have necessitated major revisions to the book. Yet its focus on fundamentals remains. Being able to assess a communication situation and audience, determine an appropriate strategy for meeting a business goal, and use words and visuals skillfully is the foundation for all the other skills. The balance between currency and timelessness—a distinguishing trait of this book throughout its 12 previous editions—is one we've worked hard to maintain.

THIS BOOK'S APPROACH AND FEATURES

Each business communication textbook brings a somewhat unique perspective to the subject. This section describes our approach.

The Nature of Business Communication

Our primary assumption about business communication is that it is a *problem-solving activity*. *Lesikar's* was the first book to take this approach, and it is still the only book with this approach at its core. From the first page to the last, this book makes clear that successful business communication requires analysis, judgment, imagination, and effort. Rules of thumb and common patterns are helpful, but preparing an effective document or presentation takes a lot of planning and revision. Students need to be told up front that business communication is not that easy . . . but undertaken with creativity, intelligence, and diligence, it can be extremely rewarding and even fun.

Toward this end, this book includes the most problem-solving cases, by far, of any book on the market—over 150 of them. These realistic scenarios make students consider specific contextual factors as they shape their messages, proposals, and reports. In addition, the cases acquaint students with goals they're likely to encounter on the job, from resolving ethical issues, solving management problems, and crafting company policies to reporting information, selling a product or idea, and managing customer relations. The realistic practice that these cases provide is the key payoff of this book's approach.

Technology

To plan and communicate well, students must know what kinds of communication technologies are available, how their usage differs, and how to use them responsibly. The medium carries its own message, and what medium one uses affects one's communication choices. Plus, familiarity with a wide range of tools enables one to write better, work more efficiently, and produce more professional-looking products. Without overwhelming the students with technical details, we've incorporated dozens of useful communication-related technologies into this book, in every chapter and on almost every topic.

Students must also understand that technology changes. At the foundation of good communication is the ability to do research, to think, to understand other people, to organize one's thoughts logically and tactically, and to use well-chosen verbal and visual elements. We keep our primary emphasis on these skills.

Today's Students

These days, students have a lower tolerance than ever for longwindedness, outdatedness, and irrelevance. We believe that they have a right to expect their business communication book to practice what it preaches. Many of our edits were thus intended to make this edition more reader focused, efficient, engaging, and real.

On the other hand, today's students tend to want clear-cut, quick answers to every question, and this is an unrealistic expectation to bring to business communication. They need to understand what an uncertain enterprise communication is and to be encouraged to solve problems with their own resourceful thinking.

Odd as it may sound, they also need to be encouraged to expand their technological literacy. Research shows that students are expert at using a few

applications (e.g., phone apps, email clients, Facebook, and Twitter) but unaware of many other applications useful in business. Further, students tend to be familiar only with such basic software features as “open,” “save,” “copy,” “paste,” “print,” and “save.” Thus, most students can even use some instruction on Word, PowerPoint, and Excel.

Research shows as well that increased use of digital written communication has reduced students’ skill with other media (e.g., body language and facial expressions, oral communication). Businesses need employees who can interview others, conduct an effective phone conference, and find information. Many of the exercises and cases in this book require students to practice these skills.

Another fact we’ve kept in mind is that business communication students’ needs and interests can vary greatly, even within the same class. Some students will want to work for major corporations, while others plan to work for small businesses, start their own, or seek work in the nonprofit sector. Some have modest career goals, while others want the fast track to the executive suite. Some will bring strong skills and experience to their coursework, while others will need extra attention to the basics. A comprehensive business communication textbook should accommodate a wide range of student abilities and goals.

This understanding of our students informs the text of the book as well as these special features:

- *Learning Objectives* at the start, at the end, and throughout each chapter that make the main goals of the chapter clear.
- *Introductory Challenges* (formerly “Introductory Situations”) that launch each chapter and each form of business communication with a business scenario to draw students quickly into the topic being discussed.
- *Examples of good and bad solutions* for the Introductory Challenges.
- Full-page *Case Illustrations* (real business messages, proposals, and reports), with margin notes, to show how to apply the book’s advice.
- *Outlines and checklists* to help students grasp basic organizational patterns and editing guidelines.
- *Communication Matters* boxes that provide expert commentary, interesting facts, and helpful tips.
- *Technology in Brief* boxes illustrating numerous tools and techniques for making the most of technological aids to business communication.
- *Chapter summaries* that distill each chapter’s contents into key points.
- *Critical Thinking Questions, Skills Building Exercises, and Problem-Solving Cases* at the end of the

chapters to promote comprehension, retention, and skillful use of concepts.

- An *Online Learning Center* (OLC) that provides online quizzing, PowerPoint slides, video cases, and *Bizcom Tools & Tips*, a collection of business communication Web resources.
- A *QR code* at the end of every chapter that takes students directly to the book’s online resources.

TODAY’S TEACHERS

Business communication teachers face a daunting task: teaching a complex set of concepts and skills in an environment of shrinking resources, increasing class size, and sometimes insufficient support from department administrators. Perhaps the main challenge of the job is that the workload tends to encourage an emphasis on surface features (e.g., correctness and formatting), while effective business communication depends as well on higher-order skills (e.g. critical thinking, adaptation to the audience, and editing one’s work). How to do it all—and do it well?

In working to make this edition appealing to students, we hope we’ve helped with a major part of the battle. The student features listed above also give teachers many excellent talking points and many resources for creating engaging activities and assignments.

In addition, we include the following help for instructors:

- *Annotated PowerPoint slides* for each chapter that include summaries, examples, and interactive slides.
- A downloadable *Instructor’s Resource Manual*, which includes sample syllabi and rubrics, sample lectures and classroom activities keyed to the PowerPoint slides, answers to end-of-chapter Critical Thinking Questions and Skills Building Exercises, and sample solutions to selected Problem-Solving Cases.
- *Appendices* on formatting, grading symbols, and documentation of sources.
- A *detailed chapter on correctness*, ending with a diagnostic test for students (with the answers provided in Appendix A).
- A downloadable *Test Bank* for each chapter, along with a computerized test generator for building custom tests.
- An *Online Learning Center* (OLC) that includes resources for every chapter along with video cases and an extensive collection of business communication Web resources, *Bizcom Tools & Tips*.
- A link to *Bcomm Teacher Xchange* (bcommteacherexchange.wordpress.com), our blog for business

communication instructors. As of the end of 2012, we'd posted almost 100 articles, and we post a new one every other week. You can easily keep track of the latest news, tips, and resources in business communication by using the RSS feed or an email subscription.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Like the 12 editions before it, this book moves from the more foundational topics to the more specialized ones. The chapters certainly do not have to be taught in the sequence in which they're presented (in fact, a few instructors we know swear by starting with the job-search chapter), but the building-blocks approach represented by this plan tends to work well.

Part I introduces students to the world of business communication. Chapter 1 describes the important role that communication plays in the workplace, current challenges for business communicators, main categories of business communication, and the business communication process. Chapter 2, picking up on a major trend discussed in the previous chapter, discusses the special challenges posed by cross-cultural communication.

Part II reviews the basic techniques of clear, correct, reader-adapted writing. Chapter 3 helps students choose the best wording for their readers, while Chapter 4 focuses on writing effective sentences and paragraphs. Chapter 5 ends this section with advice on managing tone and emphasis.

Part III opens with a chapter on the writing process, the importance of readable formatting, and special considerations for each major medium of business writing, including social media. This section then provides patterns and advice for preparing the most common message types: good-news and neutral messages, bad-news messages, persuasive messages and proposals, and messages related to the job search. These chapters also discuss the choice of direct or indirect structure for the different types of messages.

Part IV concentrates on report writing, beginning with such basics as determining the problem and purpose, gathering and analyzing data, creating a logical structure, writing and formatting the contents, and preparing reports collaboratively. It then discusses four types of short reports and the long, formal report; business research methods, including Internet research; and the use of visuals to enhance reader comprehension.

Part V turns to oral communication, with a chapter on interpersonal communication and meetings and a chapter on oral reports and presentations. The topics range from the basics of speaking and listening to the

effective use of different media, including presentation software and Web-conferencing tools.

Part VI provides two chapters—one on writing-related technologies and one on correctness—that can assist students with almost all the other chapters in the book.

Appendices also provide grading checklists, additional guidelines for formatting written documents, and advice and models for documenting sources.

WHAT'S NEW IN THE 13TH EDITION

This edition of *Lesikar's Business Communication* maintains the book's focus on the fundamentals of successful business communication while adapting to the current business and academic environments and incorporating the advice of our helpful reviewers.

Perhaps the most noticeable changes are that

- The cross-cultural communication and research chapters have been moved to earlier locations in the book to better reflect their importance.
- The chapters on good-news and neutral, bad-news, and persuasive messages and proposals no longer have the words "Directness" and "Indirectness" in their titles. These chapters still recommend the more common pattern of organization for each message type, but the change is meant to allow students more latitude in choosing the pattern that best suits the situation.
- The writing style is better adapted to today's students. It is less stuffy, more efficient, and easier to comprehend.
- Just as technology now plays a role in every facet of business, it is everywhere in this book—in the text, in the boxed material, in the examples, in the exercises and cases, and in the visual material. Effective use of communication technologies, which has been a special focus of *Lesikar's* since the 6th edition, has acquired even greater prominence in this edition.
- A QR code at the end of each chapter now makes it easy for students to visit the book's website, where they'll find many more resources.
- Three new executives are featured in the book's six Part Openers: Stuart Crabb, head of learning and development at Facebook; Lynn Marmer, chief communications officer for Kroger Company; and Caroline Molina-Ray, Executive Director of Research and Publications at Apollo Research Institute.

As with each previous new edition, the references, examples, visuals, and exercises have been updated in

every chapter. In addition, each chapter has undergone significant revision, as follows:

Chapter 1: Understanding Workplace Communication

- Now opens with an Introductory Challenge (a hypothetical workplace scenario) to generate student interest in the chapter contents.
- Provides the latest statistics on the importance of communication skills in the workplace.
- Updates the “Current Challenges for Business Communicators” section with research on workplace trends from the experts at the Institute for the Future, Apollo Research Institute, and the Aspen Institute.
- Incorporates new media and genres into the discussion of types of workplace communication.

Chapter 2: Communicating Across Cultures

- Now follows Chapter 1 to reflect the increasing importance of communicating well with those in or from other countries and cultures.
- Includes Hofstede’s “power distance” factor in the discussion of different cultures’ attitudes toward social hierarchy.
- Includes research on the cultural influences on online communication.
- Updates the page of additional resources on cross-cultural communication.

Chapter 3: Adapting Your Words to Your Readers

- Updates the Introductory Challenge as well as the boxed material on annoying business clichés, intergenerational communication, and grammar and style checkers.
- Includes a reference to and definition of *plain language*.
- Uses a more logical, less redundant structure and sharper headings, making the chapter’s points clearer and more distinct. (For example, connotation and denotation, often-confused words, and idioms were all discussed in one section. Now they’ve been separated for better emphasis.)
- Expands and updates the discussion of language referring to those with disabilities.

Chapter 4: Constructing Clear Sentences and Paragraphs

- Opens with an updated Introductory Challenge.
- Trims the prefatory sections to get more quickly to the chapter’s advice.
- Adds Communication Matters boxes on limiting the use of “there is/there are” and on avoiding the use of vague “this.”
- Includes clearer advice about using short sentences for emphasis and varying sentence structure (e.g., use of coordination and subordination) to manage emphasis.
- Expands the discussion of faulty parallelism.

Chapter 5: Writing for a Positive Effect

- Makes a better case up front for paying attention to the human relations dimension of business writing.
- Shortens the discussion of “the old language of business” since today’s students rarely use this language. They do overuse clichés, so the section on this stylistic problem has been expanded.
- Renames the section previously labeled “Resisting the Tendency to Be Formal” to “Choosing the Right Level of Formality” and does a better job of helping students manage the writer–reader relationship through appropriate word choice.
- Renames the section “Tailoring Your Message to Your Reader,” which covered points already made in the chapter, to “Avoid Blaming the Reader” and discusses techniques for being tactful. This new section also includes a brief discussion of avoiding anger, replacing the unnecessarily long section on this topic.
- Adds a Technology in Brief box on “Courtesy in the Age of Mobile Devices” based on the latest advice from Emily Post’s *Etiquette*.
- Better incorporates the concluding section on managing emphasis by focusing on techniques that contribute to a positive effect.

Chapter 6: Choosing the Best Process and Form

- Updates the audience analysis checklist to address what the audience knows; what the audience needs to know; and what the audience needs to think, feel, do, or believe as a result of the communication.
- Provides current advice on letter writing, particularly on avoiding the use of greetings such as “to whom it may concern” and other outdated expressions.
- Revises the discussion of email to treat it as the established form of business communication it has become rather than as an emerging technology. The sections on email content and structure have also been deleted to make the discussion of email more parallel with that of letters and memos.
- Replaces outdated content on pros and cons of email with advice on current email practices in the workplace and on the role of email in the context of newer communication technologies such as texting and instant messaging.
- Adds a Communication Matters box on the top 10 email mistakes.
- Updates the information on text and instant messaging and social media communication as forms of business messages.
- Adds the content from Chapter 17 regarding print versus online documents, updates this content to reflect the primary differences between the two

types, and offers current advice for writing Web content.

Chapter 7: Getting to the Point in Good-News and Neutral Messages

- Shifts the title's focus from directness (an organizational strategy) to the categories of messages being discussed (good-news and neutral).
- Incorporates a running narrative about routine communication at a hypothetical company, White Label Industries, throughout the chapter's Introductory Challenges. This enables instructors to discuss various communication tasks within a single company and provides a consistent scenario for addressing audience, context, and communication goals.
- Updates the good and bad examples to match the new Introductory Challenge scenarios.
- Clarifies the discussion on how to begin a message directly.
- Updates the Case Illustrations.
- Includes a section on direct claims, previously in the chapter on negative messages, with the rationale that routine claims require an approach more like that of neutral messages than that of bad-news messages.
- Adds a Communication Matters box about a company that is doing away with email as a communication channel. This presents an excellent discussion point for instructors.
- Includes 52 revised or new Problem-Solving Cases.

Chapter 8: Maintaining Goodwill in Bad-News Messages

- Shifts the title's focus on indirectness (an organizational strategy) to a focus on the category of messages being discussed (bad-news).
- Cites current research on when to use the direct versus the indirect approach for communicating bad news.
- Addresses the use of apologies in bad-news messages.
- Continues the White Label Industries narrative from Chapter 7 in some of the Introductory Challenges for bad-news messages, which lets instructors continue the simulation in a different rhetorical context.
- Incorporates additional new Introductory Challenges throughout the chapter, with new good and bad sample solutions.
- Adds three new Case Illustrations of bad-news messages written in the indirect approach: a refused request to an external audience, a refused request to an internal audience, and a negative announcement.
- Omits the discussion of direct claims (moved to Chapter 7), keeping the focus in this chapter on preparing claims for an unreceptive audience.

- Adds a Technology in Brief box on using Quick Parts for messages that are sent frequently or routinely.
- Includes 36 revised or new Problem-Solving Cases.

Chapter 9: Making Your Case with Persuasive Messages and Proposals

- Includes "Proposals" in the chapter title to better signal where this topic is covered.
- Updates the "Sales Messages" section with a new Introductory Challenge and new bad and good ways to handle it, new Case Illustrations, and references to the newer sales media (e.g., Facebook pages and Twitter messages).
- Adds a new section, "Enhancing Your Message with Visuals," to highlight the importance of planning compelling visual components for sales messages.
- Adds a Communication Matters box on Web resources for proposal writing.
- Ends with 35 revised or new Problem-Solving Cases for sales and proposal writing.

Chapter 10: Conducting a Winning Job Campaign

- Cites current research on the value employers place on internships.
- Adds a Technology in Brief box on tips for creating an effective LinkedIn profile.
- Includes comments in various parts of the chapter on how employers and job seekers use social networking sites in the hiring or job-search process.
- Distinguishes between features of print résumés and electronic résumés.
- Clarifies the discussion of the various types of electronic résumés (e.g., email, scannable, Web-based).
- Provides an extended discussion of best practices for creating electronic résumés.
- Clarifies when to include references with a résumé.
- Adds a Communication Matters box reporting a study on how much time employers spend reviewing résumés before deciding whether a candidate is a good fit.
- Updates the Case Illustrations for the résumé and cover letter examples.
- Adds a Communication Matters box on the 10 toughest interview questions.
- Adds a Communication Matters box emphasizing the importance of thank-you notes.

Chapter 11: Preparing Informative and Influential Business Reports

- Clarifies the discussion of problem statements by using "problem statement" to mean a description of the situation requiring a solution and "purpose statement" to mean the stated goal of the research conducted to find that solution.

- Adds basic guidelines for conducting research as preparation for Chapter 13 (“Conducting Research for Decision Makers”).
- Includes a new Technology in Brief box on report-writing software.
- Reduces the overly long section on writing headings but extends the discussion of making them parallel.

Chapter 12: Choosing the Right Type of Report

- Updates the discussion of problem statements for reports to incorporate the distinction between “problem statement” and “purpose statement.”
- Updates and enhances the sample reports.
- Adds a new sample progress report to show students how to prepare one about a course project.
- Removes audit reports since these are too specialized and often too routinized to be useful to most students.
- Ends with 35 revised or new Problem-Solving Cases and 152 additional report topics.

Chapter 13: Conducting Research for Decision Makers

- Is now grouped with the report-writing chapters to signal the importance of research to report writing.
- Opens with a new motivational section, “Why Research Matters,” followed by an overview of the main categories of research.
- Gets quickly to resources that students and professionals are likely to use—e.g., the Internet and other Web resources—rather than getting bogged down right away in a list of reference materials.
- Includes a new section on conducting research with social networking tools—Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, wikis, blogs, and listservs—and social bookmarking tools.
- Explains what a database (e.g., ABI/Inform) is and how to search it.
- Streamlines the discussion of reference materials by putting these resources into a descriptive table and updates the page-long List of Resources by Research Question.
- Includes more thorough, concrete advice on designing surveys.
- Expands the discussion of ethical guidelines for conducting research.

Chapter 14: Using Visuals to Make Your Point

- Changes “graphics” to “visuals” throughout to better reflect that business communicators have more options than just those that graph raw data.
- Adds a new Introductory Challenge.
- Adds a Communication Matters box on infographics.

- Incorporates many new visuals to illustrate common types of visuals used in business communication.
- Adds a Communication Matters box on avoiding chartjunk.

Chapter 15: Communicating Effectively in Meetings and Conversations

- Incorporates a new Introductory Challenge.
- Adds a Communication Matters box providing specific exercises and tips for improving voice quality.
- Adds a Communication Matters box on negotiation as an interpersonal skill.
- Includes a Technology in Brief box encouraging students to become familiar with online meeting tools such as Skype and to try using these tools for their group meetings.
- Updates the discussion of phone etiquette and organizes the information clearly into categories of initiating calls, answering calls directly, and screening calls for others.
- Deletes the discussion on using speech-recognition software for creating messages and reports. Some of the information is relocated to Chapter 17, “Leveraging Technology for Better Writing.”
- Updates the Communication Matters box on using a professional handshake.
- Adds information regarding current research on the relationship between the technology use of “digital natives” (Gen Xers and Gen Yers) and the potential underdevelopment of their nonverbal communication skills.

Chapter 16: Delivering Oral Reports and Business Speeches

- Enhances and clarifies the section on oral reports.
- Replaces “Making Formal Speeches” with “Giving Speeches and Presentations” to reduce the emphasis on speeches and increase the emphasis on the more common types of talks.
- Adds advice on choosing the best medium/media for the presentation.
- Adds sections on planning for interaction with the audience and choosing the means of audience feedback (e.g., Q&A, Twitter).
- Adds a Communication Matters box on TED talks.
- Gives better advice about planning and using visuals to support a talk.
- Relabels the section “Use of PowerPoint” as “Use of Presentation Software” and presents guidelines for using any presentation tool (e.g., Prezi, Google Docs, SlideRocket).
- Adds a section on using handouts to support a talk.

- Recasts the final section on virtual presentations as “Delivering Web-Based Presentations” and moves it up in the chapter to reflect the increased popularity of webinars.

Chapter 17: Leveraging Technology for Better Writing

- Focuses the chapter specifically on technologies that enhance writing ability rather than on general communication technologies since the latter are discussed throughout the text.
- Eliminates redundancies between this chapter and Chapter 13 (“Conducting Research for Decision Makers”) in terms of gathering information electronically.
- Distinguishes between, and discusses separately, the use of technology to organize a project and the use of technology to organize a document.
- Reorganizes content to flow more logically. For example, the discussion of speech-recognition software is moved to the section on technologies for drafting rather than on technologies for revising and editing.
- Updates terminology to reflect current usage (e.g., “electronic calendar” rather than “personal information management tool”).
- Discusses RSS feeds and tablet or smartphone apps as information-gathering tools.
- Mentions multimedia tools, document design software, and Web development software as options for creating and presenting information.
- Omits the discussion of print versus electronic documents (moved to Chapter 6).
- Adds visuals of iPad apps to reflect current technology used in business communication.
- Provides a Communication Matters box on knowing one’s audience before using texting abbreviations or other “text speak.”

Chapter 18: Conveying Professionalism Through Correctness

- Includes 50 new practice sentences to build students’ skills in the use of pronoun case, pronoun–antecedent agreement, subject–verb agreement, punctuation, and the apostrophe.
- Provides additional guidelines on pronoun–antecedent agreement.
- Adds a Communication Matters box citing current news articles that discuss the relationship between an employee’s use of good grammar and success in the workplace.

In addition, Appendix B (“Physical Presentation of Letters, Memos, and Reports”) and Appendix E (“Documentation and the Bibliography”) have been updated to reflect current practices and technologies for formatting documents and citing sources.

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Many dedicated business communication instructors and business professionals have contributed to this book throughout its long history. We extend our sincere thanks to them for their ideas and inspiration.

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