Talking Business

Talking Business

Effective Communication Skills for the Workplace

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FANSHAWE COLLEGE PRESSBOOKS
LONDON ONTARIO

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Chapter 8: Creating & Organizing Presentations

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About the book

Communication is the process of sharing meaning and understanding. We are often sharing, but are not always understood, nor do we always understand what others mean. Communication is both a skill and an art. You communicate everyday without thinking much about the process — it is a primary skill you have been practicing since birth!

There are many ways to learn effective communication skills; the school of experience, or "hard knocks," is one of them. But in the business environment, a "knock" (or lesson learned) may come at the expense of your credibility through an ineffective presentation to a client, or a crucial conversation with your boss. The classroom, with information and resources such as a textbook, knowledgeable instructor, and supportive peers, provides a safe environment for you to practice in. During practice, you get to expand your horizons a bit and try out new ideas and skills before you have to use them to make a sale, work with customers from another culture, or form a new partnership. Discussing concepts such as cultural diversity, teamwork, conflict resolution and ethics will help you reflect on your own background, experiences, and ways of managing communication — and hopefully assess your own perceptions and any possible biases. The net result of this course should be your growth as an individual. Ultimately, your ability to communicate will improve, opening doors in your career and going a long way to strengthening all of your interpersonal relationships.

This textbook is a compilation of the work of a multitude of individuals – least of all me. There have been many authors who have contributed from a variety or sources, as well as talented instructional designers, editors, graphic designers, copyright officers, quality assurance managers, and project leads. In the background there are also those who have created ancillary resources such as PowerPoints and Test Banks, and educational institutions that have forked over the funds necessary to finance these projects. On top of all of these people, the text has also been informed by hundreds of students who have attended many different schools. I am especially grateful for all of the above who are attached to Fanshawe College – their support has been unwavering! It is said that "many hands make light work" – my hope is that this work will help make the lives of many students a little lighter as they go forth armed with the tools to manage communication challenges and create stronger more rewarding relationships in their personal and professional lives. 🙂

Design

This open textbook is designed in 15 chapters featuring a spectrum of current and relevant Canadian business communication topics.

Throughout the book you will be introduced to three business professionals in three different disciplines as follows:

Abe is an international graduate student from Ethiopia that recently completed her Canadian MBA program. She is in her first post-MBA role working as a Personal Finance Advisor at a major bank.

Naiomi is an Indigenous senior-level marketing professional working at a small firm in Toronto.

Dhavit is a mid-career Canadian human resources specialist working at an Ontario university.

Each of these professionals encounters communications successes and challenges in their everyday work, and their stories will be featured as reflection guidance through the textbook.

In addition, each chapter will provide learning outcomes, a list of chapter topics (Chapter Preview), "Check your Knowledge" quizzes, a chapter glossary, and additional resources.

Accessibility Statement

We are actively committed to increasing the accessibility and usability of the textbooks we produce. Every attempt has been made to make this OER accessible to all learners and is compatible with assistive and adaptive technologies. We have attempted to provide closed captions, alternative text, or multiple formats for on-screen and off-line access.

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Changes from Previous Version

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Sections from other resources are noted below.

Chapter 1	Adapted from Chapter 1: Professional Business Communication. Chapter 1 name changed, but content was not altered other than some sections were moved around.
Chapter 2	Adapted from Chapter 3: You and Your Audience. Chapter 2 name changed. Section 20 Listening and Reading for understanding from adapted book moved to Chapter 6.
Chapter 3	Adapted from Chapter 10: Intercultural and International Communication
Chapter 4	Adapted from Chapter 2: Delivering Your Message & Chapter 4: Nonverbal Communication. Merged both chapters , and removed some sections. Removed 11 Messages and 14 Improving Verbal Communication
Chapter 5	Adapted from Chapter 2: Making Ethical Decisions and Managing a Socially Responsible Business from Introduction to Business by Open Stax- Rice University
Chapter 6	Adapted from Chapter 9: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Communication. Sections on Employment interviewing and conflict in the work environment were removed. Listening and Reading for understanding was added.
Chapter 7	Adapted from Chapter 11: Group Communication, Teamwork, and Leadership. Sections on conflict (Chapter 9) conflict management from Communication for Business Professionals by Department of Communication, Indiana State University and crucial conversations from Principles of Management by University of Minnesota were added here, Significant editing was done from the content from Indiana State in sections 7.6.
Chapter 8	Adapted from Chapter 5: Presentation Organization
Chapter 9	Adapted from Chapter 6: Developing Presentations
Chapter 10	Adapted from Chapter 7: Presentations to Inform
Chapter 11	Adapted from Chapter 8: Presentations to Persuade
Chapter 12	Adapted from Chapter 12: Groups and Meetings from An Introduction to Group Communication by Phil Venditti and Scott McLean
Chapter 13	Adapted from Interview Toolkit by Fanshawe College
Chapter 14	Adapted from Chapter 12: Digital Media and Communications
Chapter 15	This chapter is an amalgamation of resources from Professional Business Practice and Business Communication for Success and Making Conflict Suck Less: The Basics and Professional Communications OER and lastly, Communication in the Real World

Overall formatting was updated. Introduction and Conclusion information was added to multiple chapters to make the book consistent.

CHAPTER 1: COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

Chapter Preview

1.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, learners will be able to:

- Recognize the importance of communication.
- Define communication as the communication process.
- Identify and describe the eight essential components of communication.
- Explore the different contexts affecting communication.
- Discuss the responsibilities of a business communicator.

Professional Perspective

Naiomi was recently promoted and now has a small team reporting to her. She is getting ready for the first team meeting. She knows that each member of the team will have expectations around communication. She wants the first meeting to go really well, as it will set the tone for the future. As you read this chapter consider some of the ways that Naiomi can ensure she is communicating effectively in her first team meeting.

1.1 What is Communication?

All communication is composed of three parts that make a whole: sharing, understanding, and meaning.

Photo by Jason Rosewell, Unsplash License

Sharing means doing something together with one or more person(s). In communication, sharing occurs when you convey thoughts, feelings, ideas, or insights to others. You also share with yourself (a process called intrapersonal communication) when you bring ideas to consciousness, ponder how you feel about something, figure out the solution to a problem, or have a classic "Aha!" moment when something becomes clear.

The second key word is **understanding**. "To understand is to perceive, to interpret, and to relate our perception and interpretation to what we already know." (McLean, 2003) Understanding the words and the concepts or objects they refer to is an important part of the communication process.

Finally, **meaning** is what you share through communication. For example, by looking at the context of a word, and by asking questions, you can discover the shared meaning of the word and better understand the message.

Watch the following 8 minute video reviewing Types of Communication.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=31#oembed-1

Video: Types of Communication Interpersonal, Non Verbal, Written Oral Video Lesson by Zaharul Hafiq [7:56] transcript available.

1.2 Communications Process: Encoding and Decoding

In basic terms, humans communicate through a process of **encoding** and **decoding**. The encoder is the person who develops and sends the message. As represented in Figure 1.1 below, the encoder must determine how the message will be received by the audience, and make adjustments so the message is received the way they want it to be received.

- **Encoding** is the process of turning thoughts into communication. The encoder uses a 'medium' to send the message — a phone call, email, text message, face-to-face meeting, or other communication tool. The level of conscious thought that goes into encoding messages may vary. The encoder should also take into account any 'noise' that might interfere with their message, such as other messages, distractions, or influences.
- The audience then 'decodes', or interprets, the message for themselves. **Decoding** is the process of turning communication into thoughts. For example, you may realize you're hungry and encode the following message to send to your roommate: "I'm hungry. Do you want to get pizza tonight?" As your roommate receives the message, they decode your communication and turn it back into thoughts to make meaning.

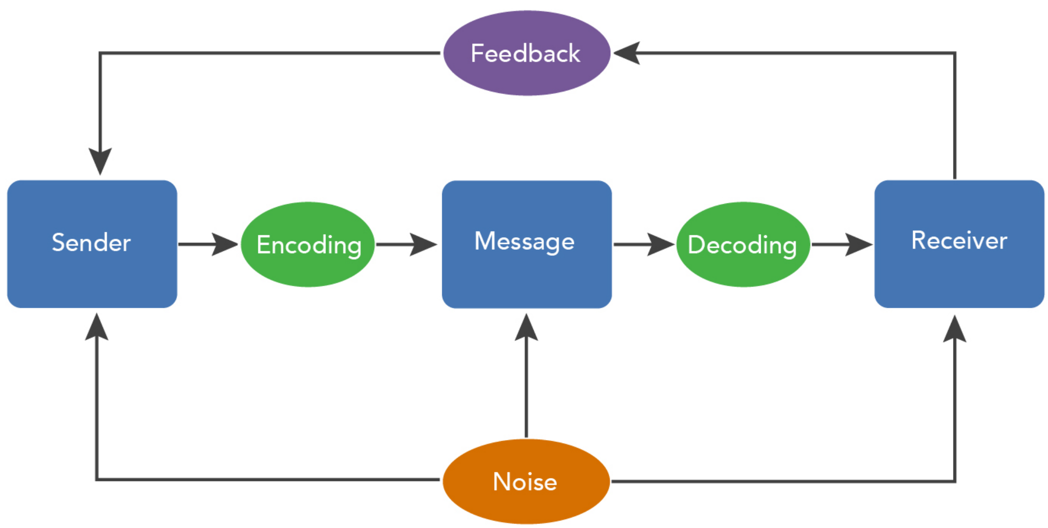


Figure 1.1 "The Communication Process" by Lumen Learning, CC BY 4.0

Of course, you don't just communicate verbally—you have various options, or channels, for communication. Encoded messages are sent through a channel, or a sensory route, on which a message travels to the receiver for decoding. While communication can be sent and received using any sensory route (sight, smell, touch, taste, or sound), most communication occurs through visual (sight) and/or auditory (sound) channels. If your roommate has headphones on and is engrossed in a video game, you may need to get their attention by waving your hands before you can ask them about dinner.

The **transmission model** of communication describes communication as a linear, one-way process in which a sender intentionally transmits a message to a receiver (Ellis & McClintock, 1990). This model focuses on the sender and message within a communication encounter. Although the receiver is included in the model, this role is viewed as more of a target or end point rather than part of an ongoing process. You are left to presume that the receiver either successfully receives and understands the message or does not. Think of how a radio message is sent from a person in the radio studio to you listening in your car. The sender is the radio announcer who encodes a verbal message that is transmitted by a radio tower through electromagnetic waves (the channel) and eventually reaches your (the receiver's) ears via an antenna and speakers in order to be decoded. The radio announcer doesn't really know if you receive their message or not, but if the equipment is working and the channel is free of static, then there is a good chance that the message was successfully received.

The **interaction model** of communication describes communication as a process in which participants alternate positions as sender and receiver and generate meaning by sending messages and receiving feedback within physical and psychological contexts (Schramm, 1997). Rather than illustrating communication as a linear, one-way process, the interaction model incorporates feedback, which makes communication a more interactive, two-way process. Feedback includes messages sent in response to other messages. For example, your instructor may respond to a point you raise during class discussion or you may point to the sofa when your roommate asks you where the remote control is. The inclusion of a feedback loop also leads to a more complex understanding of the roles of participants in a communication encounter. Rather than having one sender, one message, and one receiver, this model has two sender-receivers who exchange messages. Each participant alternates roles as sender and receiver in order to keep a communication encounter going. Although this seems like a perceptible and deliberate process, you alternate between the roles of sender and receiver very quickly and often without conscious thought.

The **transaction model** of communication describes communication as a process in which communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts. In this model, you don't just communicate to exchange messages; you communicate to create relationships, form intercultural alliances, shape your self-concepts, and engage with others in dialogue to create communities. In short, you don't communicate about your realities; communication helps to construct your realities (and the realities of others).

The roles of sender and receiver in the transaction model of communication differ significantly from the other models. Instead of labelling participants as senders and receivers, the people in a communication encounter are referred to as communicators. Unlike the interaction model, which suggests that participants alternate positions as sender and receiver, the transaction model suggests that you are simultaneously a sender and a receiver. For example, when meeting a new friend, you send verbal messages about your interests and background, your companion reacts nonverbally. You don't wait until you are done sending your verbal message to start receiving and decoding the nonverbal messages of your new friend. Instead, you are simultaneously sending your verbal message and receiving your friend's nonverbal messages. This is an important addition to the model because it allows you to understand how you are able to adapt your communication—for example, adapting a verbal message—in the middle of sending it based on the communication you are simultaneously receiving from your communication partner.

Verbal Communication is conveying a message through speech, and **nonverbal communication** is the process of inferring a message through observation of another person.

1.3 Eight Essential Components of Communication

The communication process can be broken down into a series of eight essential components, each of which serves an integral function in the overall process: source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, environment, context, and interference.

Table 1.1 The Communication Process

Source	The source imagines, creates, and sends the message. The source encodes the message by choosing just the right order or the best words to convey the intended meaning, and presents or sends the information to the audience (receiver). By watching for the audience's reaction, the source perceives how well they received the message and responds with clarification or supporting information.
Message	"The message is the stimulus or meaning produced by the source for the receiver or audience" (McLean, 2005). The message brings together words to convey meaning, but is also about how it's conveyed — through nonverbal cues, organization, grammar, style, and other elements.
Channel	"The channel is the way in which a message or messages travel between source and receiver." (McLean, 2005). Spoken channels include face-to-face conversations, speeches, phone conversations and voicemail messages, radio, public address systems, and Skype. Written channels include letters, memorandums, purchase orders, invoices, newspaper and magazine articles, blogs, email, text messages, tweets, and so forth.
Receiver	"The receiver receives the message from the source, analyzing and interpreting the message in ways both intended and unintended by the source" (McLean, 2005).
Feedback	When you respond to the source, intentionally or unintentionally, you are giving feedback. Feedback is composed of messages the receiver sends back to the source. Verbal or nonverbal, all these feedback signals allow the source to see how well, how accurately (or how poorly and inaccurately) the message was received (Leavitt & Mueller, 1951).
Environment	"The environment is the atmosphere, physical and psychological, where you send and receive messages" (McLean, 2005). Surroundings, people, animals, technology, can all influence your communication.
Context	"The context of the communication interaction involves the setting, scene, and expectations of the individuals involved" (McLean, 2005). A professional communication context may involve business suits (environmental cues) that directly or indirectly influence expectations of language and behaviour among the participants.
Interference	Interference, also called noise, can come from any source. "Interference is anything that blocks or changes the source's intended meaning of the message" (McLean, 2005). This can be external or internal/psychological. Noise interferes with normal encoding and decoding of the message carried by the channel between source and receiver.

1.4 Why Is It Important To Communicate Well?

People share a fundamental drive to communicate. You share meaning in what you say and how you say it, both in oral and written forms. Your communication skills help you to understand others—not just their words, but also their tone of voice, and their nonverbal gestures. The format of their written documents provides you with clues about who they are and what their values and priorities may be. Active listening and reading are also part of being a successful communicator.

Photo by Reynardo Etenia Wongso, Unsplash License

When you were an infant, you learned to talk over a period of many months. You need to begin the process of improving your speaking and writing with the frame of mind that it will require effort, persistence, and self-correction, just as it did when you were acquiring basic communication skills.

Your speaking and writing are reflections of your thoughts, experience, and education. Part of that combination is your level of experience listening to other speakers, reading documents and styles of writing, and studying formats similar to what you aim to produce.

As you study professional business communication, you may receive suggestions for improvement and clarification from speakers and writers more experienced than yourself. Your success in communicating is a skill that applies to every field of work, and it makes a difference in your relationships with others.

You want to be prepared to communicate well when given the opportunity. Each time you do a good job, your success will bring more success.

An individual with excellent communication skills is an asset to every organization. No matter what career you plan to pursue, learning to express yourself professionally in your communications will help you get there.

1.5 Communication in Context

To begin this section, watch the following 18 minute TED Talk from Sam Sommers, *The Hidden Power of Context*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=41#oembed-1

Video: TEDxSomerville: Sam Sommers – The Hidden Power of Context by TEDx Talks [18:06] transcript available.

Context is the situation under which communication takes place, and can have great influence on the communication process and the meaning of a message. Contexts can overlap, creating an even more dynamic process. You have been communicating in many contexts across your lifetime, and you'll be able to apply what you've learned from experiences in multiple contexts to business communication.

Intrapersonal Communication

Intrapersonal communication involves one person; it is often called "self-talk" (Wood, 1997). Donna Vocate's (1994) book on this topic explains how, as you use language to reflect on your own experiences, you talk yourself through situations. Your intrapersonal communication can be positive or negative, and directly influences how you perceive and react to situations and communication with others. For example, before a big presentation, you may give yourself a pep talk to calm feelings of anxiety and give yourself a boost of confidence.

What you perceive in communication with others is also influenced by your culture, native language, and your worldview. As the German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas said, "Every process of reaching understanding takes place against the background of a culturally ingrained pre-understanding" (Habermas, 1984).

Interpersonal Communication

The second major context within the field of communication is **interpersonal communication** which normally involves two people and can range from intimate and very personal to formal and impersonal. A conversation over coffee with a colleague about a project you're working on would be a form of interpersonal communication.

Group Communication

"**Group communication** is a dynamic process where a small number of people engage in a conversation" (McLean, 2005) and is generally defined as communication between three to eight people. The larger the group, the more likely it is to break down into smaller groups.

When engaging with groups, you can observe factors like age, education, sex, and location to learn more about general preferences as well as dislikes. You may find several groups within the larger audience, such as specific areas of education, and use this knowledge to increase your effectiveness as a business communicator.

Public Communication

In **public communication**, *one* person speaks to a *group* of people; the same is true of public written communication, where one person writes a message to be read by a small or large group. The speaker or writer may ask questions, and engage the audience in a discussion (in writing, examples are an email discussion or a point-counter-point series of letters to the editor), but the dynamics of the conversation are distinct from group communication, where different rules apply.

Mass Communication

Through mass communication, you send a message to as many people as possible. **Mass communication** involves sending a single message to a group. It allows you to communicate your message to a large number of people. Something to consider, however, is that you may be limited in your ability to tailor your message to specific audiences, groups, or individuals when using mass communication. As a business communicator, you can use multimedia as a visual aid or reference common programs, films, or other images that your audience finds familiar yet engaging. By choosing messages or references that many audience members will recognize or can identify with, you can develop common ground and increase the appeal of your message.

1.6 Your Responsibilities as a Communicator

Tips for Communication

Whenever you speak or write in a business environment, you have certain responsibilities to your audience, your employer, and your profession. Your audience comes to you with an inherent set of expectations that is your responsibility to fulfill. The specific expectations may change given the context or environment, but two central ideas will remain: be prepared and be ethical.

Preparation

Being prepared means that you have selected a topic appropriate to your audience, gathered enough information to cover the topic well, put your information into a logical sequence, and considered how best to present it.

- *Organization* **–** Being organized involves the steps or points that lead your communication to a conclusion. Once you've invested time in researching your topic, you will want to narrow your focus to a few key points and consider how you'll present them. You also need to consider how to link your main points together for your audience so they can follow your message from point to point.
- *Clarity* – You need to have a clear idea in your mind of what you want to say before you can say it clearly to someone else. It involves considering your audience, as you will want to choose words and phrases they understand and avoid jargon or slang that may be unfamiliar to them. Clarity also involves presentation and appropriate use of technology.
- *Punctuality* **–** Concise means to be brief and to the point. In most business communications you are expected to 'get down to business' right away. Being prepared includes being able to state your points clearly and support them with trustworthy evidence in a relatively straightforward, linear way. Be concise in your choice of words, organization, and even visual aids. Being concise also involves being sensitive to time constraints. Be prepared to be punctual and adhere to deadlines or time limits.

Some cultures also have a less strict interpretation of time schedules and punctuality. While it is important to recognize that different cultures have different expectations, the general rule holds true that good business communication does not waste words or time.

Ethics in Communication

Communicating ethically involves being egalitarian, respectful, and trustworthy—overall, practicing the "golden rule" of treating your audience the way you would want to be treated.

Communication can move communities, influence cultures, and change history. It can motivate people to take a stand, consider an argument, or purchase a product. The degree to which you consider both the common good and fundamental principles you hold to be true when crafting your message directly relates to how your message will affect others.

The Ethical Communicator Is Egalitarian

The word "egalitarian" comes from the root "equal." To be egalitarian is to believe in basic equality: that all people should share equally in the benefits and burdens of society. It means that everyone is entitled to the same respect, expectations, access to information, and rewards of participation in a group.

To communicate in an egalitarian manner, speak and write in a way that is comprehensible and relevant to all your listeners or readers, not just those who are 'like you' in terms of age, gender, race or ethnicity, or other characteristics. In business, an effective communicator seeks to unify the audience by using ideas and language that are appropriate for all the message's readers or listeners.

The Ethical Communicator Is Respectful

People are influenced by emotions as well as logic. The ethical communicator will be passionate and enthusiastic without being disrespectful. Losing one's temper and being abusive are generally regarded as showing a lack of professionalism (and could even involve legal consequences for you or your employer). When you disagree strongly with a coworker, feel deeply annoyed with a difficult customer, or find serious fault with a competitor's product, it is important to express such sentiments respectfully.

The Ethical Communicator Is Trustworthy

Trust is a key component in communication, and this is especially true in business. Your goal as a communicator is to build a healthy relationship with your audience and to do that you must show them how they can trust you and why the information you are about to share with them is believable.

Your audience will expect that what you say is the truth as you understand it. This means that you have not intentionally omitted, deleted, or taken information out of context simply to prove your points. They will listen to what you say and how you say it, but also to what you don't say or do. Being worthy of trust is something you earn with an audience. Many wise people have observed that trust is hard to build but easy to lose.

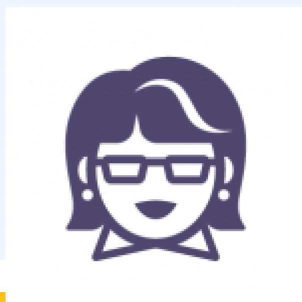
The "Golden Rule"

When in doubt, remember the "golden rule," which is to treat others the way you would like to be treated. In all its many forms, the golden rule incorporates human kindness, cooperation, and reciprocity across cultures, languages, backgrounds, and interests. Regardless of where you travel, with whom you communicate, or what your audience is like, remember how you would feel if you were on the receiving end of your communication and act accordingly.

1.7 Conclusion

Communication is an essential component of business. While communication is a natural part of the human experience, it's important to consider how you will communicate in a positive and effective manner that aligns with your responsibilities and reputation as a business professional.

Reflection Activity



Returning to Naiomi's observations at the beginning of the chapter, what are some of the ways in which Naiomi can ensure she is communicating with her team effectively?

Quick Quiz

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=48#h5p-1

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=48#h5p-5

Questions

1. Describe the process of communication.
2. Name at least four essential components of communication.
3. What role does context play in communication?
4. What responsibilities do you have as a communicator?
5. What are the three attributes of an ethical communicator?

Glossary

Channel – the channel is the way in which a message or messages travel between source and receiver (McLean, 2005).

Communication – the process of understanding and sharing meaning (Pearson Nelson, 2000).

Context – involves the setting, scene, and expectations of the individuals involved (McLean, 2005).

Decoding – the process of turning communication into thoughts.

Encoding – the process of turning thoughts into communication.

Environment – the atmosphere, physical and psychological, where you send and receive messages (McLean, 2005).

Feedback – messages the receiver sends back to the source.

Group Communication – a dynamic process where a small number of people engage in a conversation (McLean, 2005).

Interaction model – a model of communication describes communication as a process in which participants alternate positions as sender and receiver and generate meaning by sending messages and receiving feedback within physical and psychological contexts (Schramm, 1997).

Interference – anything that blocks or changes the source's intended meaning of the message (McLean, 2005).

Interpersonal Communication – normally involves two people, and can range from intimate and very personal to formal and impersonal.

Intrapersonal Communication – involves one person; it is often called "self-talk" (Wood, 1997).

Mass Communication – mass communication involves sending a single message to a group.

Meaning – what you share through communication.

Message – the stimulus or meaning produced by the source for the receiver or audience (McLean, 2005).

Nonverbal – any message inferred through observation of another person.

Public Communication – in public communication, one person speaks to a group of people; the same is true of public written communication, where one person writes a message to be read by a small or large group.

Receiver – receives the message from the source, analyzing and interpreting the message in ways both intended and unintended by the source (McLean, 2005).

Sharing – doing something together with one or more person(s).

Source – imagines, creates, and sends the message.

Transaction model – a model of communication that describes communication as a process in which communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts.

Transmission model – a model of communication that describes communication as linear, one-way process in which a sender intentionally transmits a message to a receiver (Ellis & McClintock, 1990).

Understanding – "To understand is to perceive, to interpret, and to relate our perception and interpretation to what we already know." (McLean, 2003)

Verbal (or oral) Communication – is any message conveyed through speech.

Written Communication – is any message using the written word.

Additional Resources

[The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC)] is a global network of communication professionals committed to improving organizational effectiveness through strategic communication.

[Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL)] provides a wealth of resources for writing projects.

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CHAPTER 2: PERCEPTION

Chapter Preview

2.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, learners will be able to:

- Define perception and explain ways in which you organize perceptual information.
- Describe the terms self-concept and self-esteem.
- Discuss how social norms, family, culture, and media influence self-perception.
- Give examples of the effect of self-fulfilling prophecies.
- List three ways to better understand and reach your audience.

Professional Perspective

Abe recently started a job as a financial analyst in a Canadian company. Her boss asked her to prepare and deliver a presentation to the board of directors on the budget and forecast she has been working on. She has not had a lot of practical experience presenting, and she is unfamiliar with the members of the board. She wants to make a good impression and ensure she effectively communicates her work to date. As you read this chapter consider some of the ways that Abe can ensure she meets her goals in her presentation.

2.1 Perception

Activity: Optical Illusion

Optical illusions are one way of demonstrating how one person's perception might differ from another's. In Figure 2.1 below, what can you see?

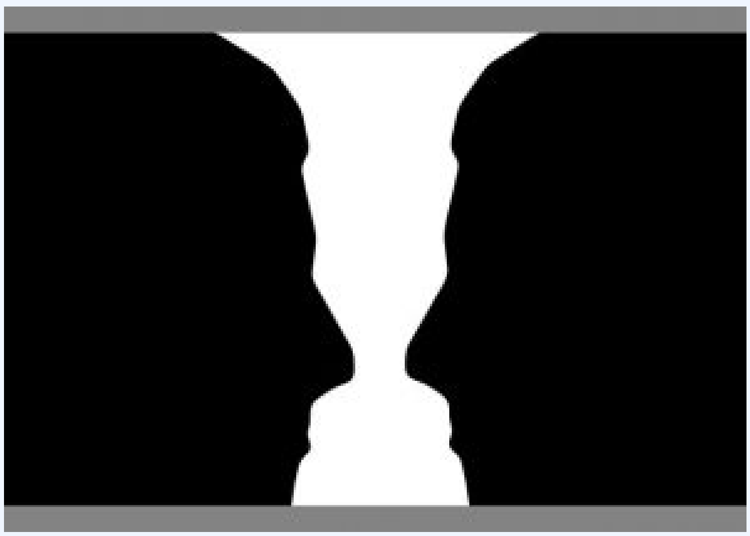

Figure 2.1. Optical illusion. The method of drawing this illustration makes it possible to either see a white vase in the centre, or two shadowed faces on the right and left.

In the same way that your visual perception can sometimes cause confusion or multiple interpretations, your perceptions related to oral and written communication can also create challenges.

Perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information. This process, which is represented in Figure 2.2 below, includes the perception of select stimuli that pass through your perceptual filters, are organized into your existing structures and patterns, and are then interpreted based on previous experiences. How you perceive the people and objects around you affects your communication. You respond differently to an object or person that you perceive favourably than you do to someone (or something) you find unfavourable. But how do you filter through the mass amounts of incoming information, organize it, and make meaning from what makes it through your perceptual filters and into your social realities?

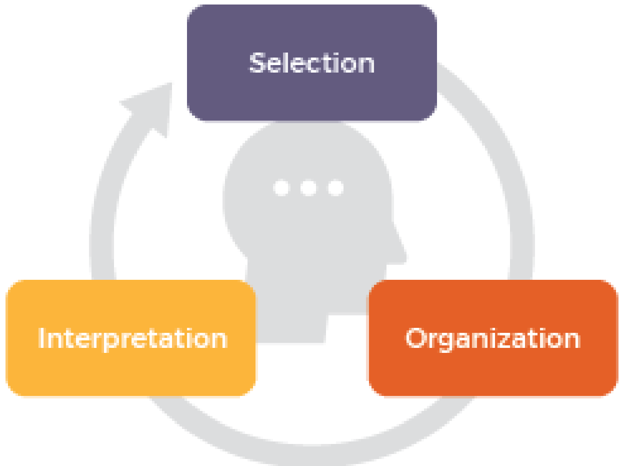

Figure 2.2. Selection, interpretation, and organization contribute to perception.

Selecting Information

Most people take in information through their five senses, but your **perceptual field** (the world around you) includes so many stimuli that it is impossible for your brain to process and make sense of it all. So, as information comes in through your senses, various factors influence what actually continues on through the perception process (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). **Selecting** is the first part of the perception process, in which you focus your attention on certain incoming sensory information. Think about how, out of many other possible stimuli to pay attention to, you may hear a familiar voice in the hallway, see a pair of shoes you want to buy from across the mall, or smell something cooking for dinner when you get home from work. You quickly cut through and push to the background all kinds of sights, smells, sounds, and other stimuli, but how do you decide what to select and what to leave out?

Watch the following 2-minute video: *The Monkey Business Illusion.*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=84#oembed-1

Video: The Monkey Business Illusion by Daniel Simons [1:41] transcript available.

You tend to pay attention to information that is salient. **Salience** is the degree to which something attracts your attention in a particular context. The thing attracting your attention can be abstract, like a concept, or concrete, like an object. Did you notice the person in the monkey suit while watching the video above? It was subtle. A bright flashlight shining in your face while camping at night is sure to be salient. The degree of salience depends on three features according to Fiske & Taylor (1991) whether the object is visually or aurally stimulating, whether it meets your needs or interests, and whether it meets or challenges your expectations.

- *Visual and Aural Stimulation* – It is probably not surprising to learn that visually and/or aurally stimulating things become salient in our perceptual field and get our attention.
- *Needs and Interests* – We tend to pay attention to information that we perceive to meet our needs or interests in some way. We also find salient information that interests us.
- *Expectations* – The relationship between salience and expectations is a little more complex. Basically, we can find expected things salient and find things that are unexpected salient.

As a communicator, you can use this knowledge about salience to your benefit by minimizing distractions when you have something important to say. It's probably better to have a serious conversation with a significant other in a quiet place rather than a crowded food court. Aside from minimizing distractions and delivering your messages enthusiastically, the content of your communication also affects salience. Whether a sign helps you find the nearest gas station, the sound of a ringtone helps us find your missing cell phone, or a speaker tells you how avoiding processed foods will improve your health, you select and attend to information that meets your needs.

Photo by unknown, CCO 1.0

Likely you have experienced the sensation of being engrossed in a television show, video game, or random project that you paid attention to at the expense of something that actually met your needs – like cleaning or spending time with a significant other. Paying attention to things that interest you but don't meet specific needs seems like the basic formula for procrastination that you might be familiar with.

If you are expecting a package to be delivered, you might pick up on the slightest noise of a truck engine or someone's footsteps approaching your front door. Since you expect something to happen, you may be extra tuned in to clues that it is coming. In terms of the unexpected, if you have a shy and soft-spoken friend who you overhear raising the volume and pitch of his voice while talking to another friend, you may pick up on that and assume that something out of the ordinary is going on. For something unexpected to become salient, it has to reach a certain threshold of difference. If you walked into your regular class and there were one or two more students there than normal, you may not even notice. If you walked into your class and there was someone dressed up as a wizard, you would probably notice. So, if you expect to experience something out of the routine, like package delivery, you will find stimuli related to that expectation salient. If you experience something that you weren't expecting and that is significantly different from your routine experiences, then you will likely find it salient. You can also apply this concept to your communication. Good instructors encourage their students to include supporting material in their speeches that defies audience expectations. You can help keep your audience engaged by employing good research skills to find such information.

Organizing Information

Organizing is the second part of the perception process, in which you sort and categorize information that you perceive based on innate and learned cognitive patterns. Three ways you sort things into patterns are by using proximity, similarity, and difference (Coren & Girgus, 1980).

- **Proximity –** In terms of proximity, we tend to think that things that are close together go together.
- **Similarity –** We also group things together based on similarity. We tend to think similar-looking or similar-acting things belong together.
- **Difference –** We also organize information that we take in based on differences. In this case, we assume that the item that looks or acts differently from the rest doesn't belong to the group.

Since you often organize perceptual information based on proximity, you may automatically perceive that two people are together, just because they are standing close together in a line.

This type of strategy for organizing information is so common that it is built into how you function in your daily life. If you think of the literal act of organizing something, like your desk at home or work, you follow these same strategies. If you have a bunch of papers and mail on the top of your desk, you will likely sort papers into separate piles for separate classes or put bills in a separate place than personal mail. You may have one drawer for pens, pencils, and other supplies and another drawer for files. In this case, you are grouping items based on similarities and differences. You may also group things based on proximity, for example, by putting financial items like your chequebook, a calculator, and your pay stubs in one area so you can update your budget easily. In summary, you simplify information and look for patterns to help conduct tasks and communicate efficiently in all aspects of your life.

Simplification and categorizing based on patterns isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, without this capability, you would likely not have the ability to speak, read, or engage in other complex cognitive/behavioural functions. There are differences among people, and looking for patterns helps you in many practical ways. However, the judgments you might place on various patterns and categories are not natural; they are learned and culturally and contextually relative. Your perceptual patterns do become unproductive and even unethical when the judgments you associate with certain patterns are based on stereotypical or prejudicial thinking.

Interpreting Information

Although selecting and organizing incoming stimuli happens very quickly, and sometimes without much conscious thought, interpretation can be a much more deliberate and conscious step in the perception process. **Interpretation** is the third part of the perception process, in which you assign meaning to your experiences using mental structures known as schemata. Schemata are like databases of stored, related information that you use to interpret new experiences. Schemata are like lenses that help you make sense of the perceptual cues around you based on previous knowledge and experience.

It's important to be aware of schemata because your interpretations affect your behaviour. For example, if you are doing a group project for class and you perceive a group member to be shy based on your schema of how shy people communicate, you may avoid giving him or her presentation responsibilities because you do not think shy people make good public speakers. Schemata also guide your interactions, providing a script for your behaviours. Many people know how to act and communicate in a waiting room, in a classroom, on a first date, and on a game show. Even a person who has never been on a game show can develop a schema for how to act in that environment by watching The Price Is Right, for example. A final example, you often include what you do for a living in your self-introduction, which then provides a schema through which others interpret your communication.

2.2 Self-Understanding is Fundamental to Communication

You need to know what you want to say before you can say it to an audience. Understanding your perspective can lend insight to your awareness, the ability to be conscious of events and stimuli. **Awareness** determines what you pay attention to, how you carry out your intentions, and what you remember of your activities and experiences each day. Awareness is a complicated and fascinating area of study. The way we take in information, give it order, and assign it meaning has long interested researchers from disciplines including sociology, anthropology, and psychology.

Your perspective is a major factor in this dynamic process. Whether you are aware of it or not, you bring to the act of reading this sentence a frame of mind formed from experiences and education across your lifetime. Learning to recognize how your perspective influences your thoughts is a key step in understanding yourself and preparing to communicate with others. In the image that follows there are two skydivers that seem to be having a lot of fun. That is their perspective. Perhaps skydiving might not be fun for everyone, it might be quite frightening to some.

Photo by Ken Alston, Pixabay License

Self-Concept

When you communicate, you are full of expectations, doubts, fears, and hopes. Where you place emphasis, what you focus on, and how you view your potential have a direct impact on your communication interactions. You gather a sense of self as you grow, age, and experience others and the world. Much of what you know about yourself you have learned through interaction with others.

The concept of the **looking glass self** explains that you see yourself reflected in other people's reactions to you and then form your self-concept based on how you believe other people see you (Cooley, 1922). This reflective process of building your self-concept is based on what other people have actually said, such as "You're a good listener," and other people's actions, such as coming to you for advice. These thoughts evoke emotional responses that feed into your self-concept. For example, you may think, "I'm glad that people can count on me to listen to their problems."

Carol Dweck, a psychology researcher at Stanford University, states that "something that seems like a small intervention can have cascading effects on things we think of as stable or fixed, including extroversion, openness to new experience, and resilience." (Begley, 2008) Your personality and expressions of it, like oral and written communication, were long thought to have a genetic component. But, says Dweck, "More and more research is suggesting that, far from being simply encoded in the genes, much of personality is a flexible and dynamic thing that changes over the life span and is shaped by experience." (Begley, 2008) If you were told by someone that you were not a good listener, know this: You can change. You can shape your performance through experience, and a business communication course, a mentor at work, or even reading effective business communication authors can result in positive change.

In Figure 2.3 below, the trio of the looking glass self is represented.

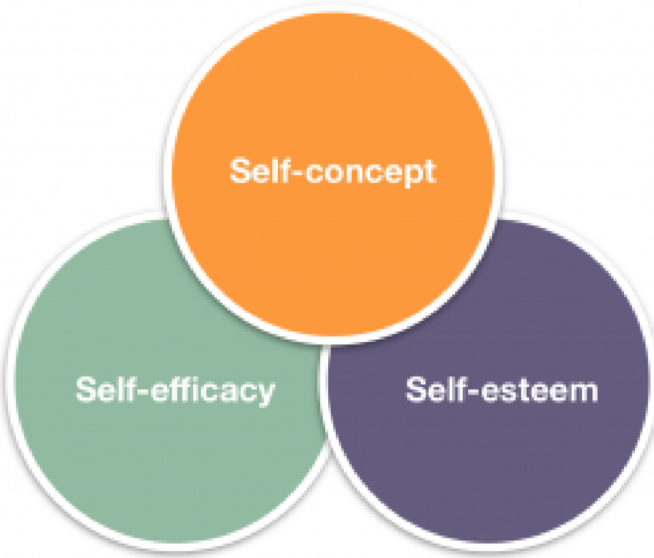

Figure 2.3. Self-concept, self-efficacy, and self-esteem.

Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values

When you consider what makes you you, the answers multiply as do the questions. As a baby, you learned to recognize that the face in the mirror was your face. But as an adult, you begin to wonder what and who you are. While you could explore the concept of self endlessly and philosophers have wrestled and will continue to wrestle with it, for your learning purpose, focus on self, which is defined as one's own sense of individuality, motivations, and personal characteristics (McLean, 2003). You also must keep in mind that this concept is not fixed or absolute; instead, it changes as you grow and change across your lifetime.

One point of discussion useful for your study about yourself as a communicator is to examine your attitudes, beliefs, and values. These are all interrelated, and researchers have varying theories as to which comes first and which springs from another. You learn your values, beliefs, and attitudes through interaction with others.

- An **attitude** is your immediate disposition toward a concept or an object. Attitudes can change easily and frequently. You may prefer vanilla while someone else prefers peppermint, but if someone tries to persuade you of how delicious peppermint is, you may be willing to try it and find that you like it better than vanilla.
- **Beliefs** are ideas based on your previous experiences and convictions and may not necessarily be based on logic or fact. You no doubt have beliefs on political, economic, and religious issues. These beliefs may not have been formed through rigorous study, but you nevertheless hold them as important aspects of self. Beliefs often serve as a frame of reference through which you interpret your world. Although they can be changed, it often takes time or strong evidence to persuade someone to change a belief.
- **Values** are core concepts and ideas of what you consider good or bad, right or wrong, or what is worth the sacrifice. Your values are central to your self-image, which makes you who you are. Like beliefs, your values may not be based on empirical research or rational thinking, but they are even more resistant to change than are beliefs. To undergo a change in values, a person may need to undergo a transformative life experience.

Self-Image and Self-Esteem

Your self-concept is composed of two main elements: self-image and self-esteem. Your **self-image** is how you see yourself, and how you would describe yourself to others. It includes your physical characteristics—your eye colour, hair length, height, and so forth. It also includes your knowledge, experience, interests, and relationships. What is your image of yourself as a communicator? How do you feel about your ability to communicate? While the two responses may be similar, they indicate different things.

Your **self-esteem** is how you feel about yourself; your feelings of self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-respect. Healthy self-esteem can be particularly important when you experience a setback or a failure. High self-esteem will enable you to persevere and give yourself positive messages like "If I prepare well and try harder, I can do better next time."

Test Your Self-Esteem

Use the following link to participate in a small Psychology Today experiment about self-esteem:

Activity: Test Your Self-Esteem

Putting your self-image and self-esteem together yields your self-concept: your central identity and set of beliefs about who you are and what you are capable of accomplishing. When it comes to communicating, your self-concept can play an important part. You may find that communicating is a struggle, or the thought of communicating may make you feel talented and successful. Either way, if you view yourself as someone capable of learning new skills and improving as you go, you will have an easier time learning to be an effective communicator. Whether positive or negative, your self-concept influences your performance and the expression of that essential ability: communication.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

In a psychology experiment that has become famous through repeated trials, several public school teachers were told that specific students in their classes were expected to do quite well because of their intelligence (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). These students were identified as having special potential that had not yet "bloomed." What the teachers didn't know was that these "special potential" students were randomly selected. That's right: as a group, they had no more special potential than any other students. Can you anticipate the outcome? As you may guess, the students lived up to their teachers' level of expectation. Even though the teachers were supposed to give appropriate attention and encouragement to all students, in fact, they unconsciously communicated special encouragement verbally and nonverbally to the special potential students. And these students, who were actually no more gifted than their peers, showed significant improvement by the end of the school year. This phenomenon came to be called the "Pygmalion effect" after the myth of a Greek sculptor named Pygmalion, who carved a marble statue of a woman so lifelike that he fell in love with her—and in response to his love, she did, in fact, come to life and marry him (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Insel & Jacobson, 1975).

In more recent studies, researchers have observed that the opposite effect can also happen: when students are seen as lacking potential, teachers tend to discourage them or, at a minimum, fail to give them adequate encouragement. As a result, the students do poorly (Anyon, 1980; Oakes, 1985; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Schugurensky, 2009).

When people encourage you, it affects the way you see yourself and your potential. Seek encouragement for your writing and speaking. Actively choose positive reinforcement as you develop your communication skills. You will make mistakes, but the important thing is to learn from them. Keep in mind that criticism should be constructive, with specific points you can address, correct, and improve. The concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which someone's behaviour comes to match and mirror others' expectations, is not new. Robert Rosenthal, a professor of social psychology at Harvard, observed four principles while studying this interaction between expectations and performance:

1. We form certain expectations of people or events.
2. We communicate those expectations with various cues, verbal and nonverbal.
3. People tend to respond to these cues by adjusting their behaviour to match the expectations.
4. The outcome is that the original expectation becomes true.

To summarize, you can become a more effective communicator by understanding yourself and how others view you: your attitudes, beliefs, and values; your self-concept; and how the self-fulfilling prophecy may influence your decisions.

2.3 Getting to Know Your Audience

Writing to your audience's expectations is key to your success, but how do you get a sense of your readers? Research, time, and effort. At first glance, you may think you know your audience, but if you dig a little deeper you will learn more about them and become a better speaker.

Figure 2.4, below is often called the iceberg model. When you see an iceberg in the ocean, the great majority of its size and depth lie below your level of visual awareness. When you write a document or give a presentation, each person in your reading or listening audience is like the tip of an iceberg. You may perceive people of different ages, races, ethnicities, and genders, but those are only surface characteristics. This is your challenge. When you communicate with a diverse audience, you are engaging in intercultural communication. The more you learn about the audience, the better you will be able to navigate the waters, and your communication interactions, safely, and effectively.

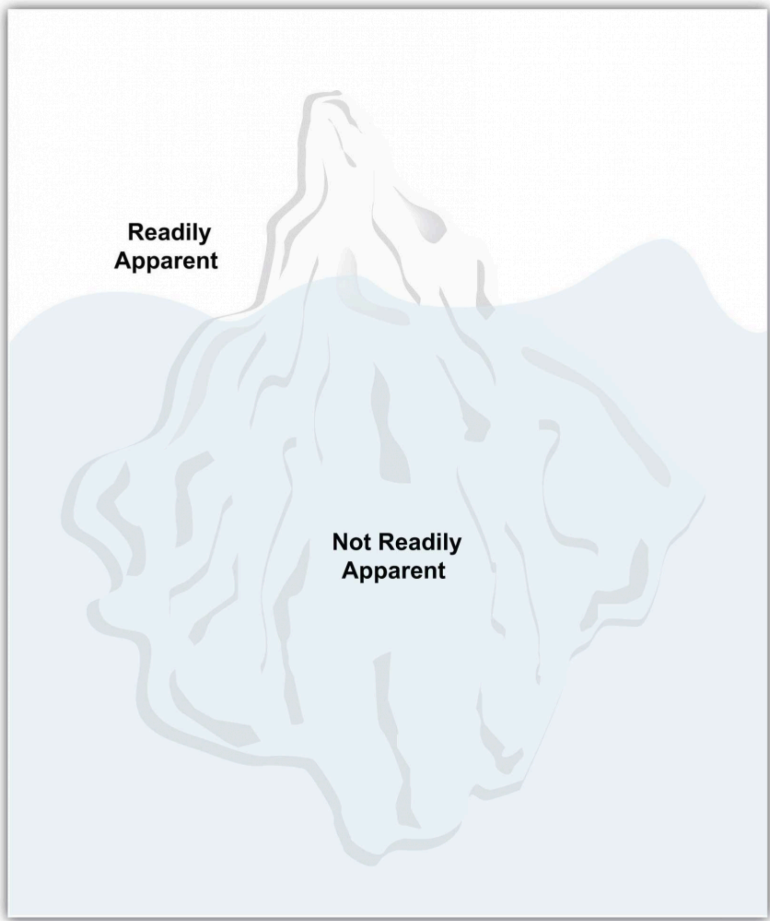

Figure 2.4. Iceberg Model

Theodore Roosevelt pointed out that "the most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people." Knowing your audience well before you speak is essential. Here are a few questions to help guide you in learning more about your audience:

- How big is the audience?

- What are their backgrounds, gender, age, jobs, education, and/or interests?
- Do they already know about your topic? If so, how much?
- Will other materials be presented or available? If so, what are they, what do they cover, and how do they relate to your message?
- How much time is allotted for your presentation, or how much space do you have for your written document? Will your document or presentation stand-alone or do you have the option of adding visuals, audio-visual aids, or links?

Demographic Traits

Demographic traits refer to the characteristics that make someone an individual, but that he or she has in common with others. Imagine that you are writing a report on the health risks associated with smoking. To get your message across to an audience of twelve-year-olds, clearly, you would use different language and different examples than what you would use for an audience of adults aged fifty-five and older.

Tailor your message to your audience

Writing for readers in the insurance industry, you would likely choose examples of how insurance claims are affected by whether or not a policyholder smokes, whereas if you were writing for readers who are athletes, you would focus on how the human body reacts to tobacco.

Audiences tend to be interested in messages that relate to their interests, needs, goals, and motivations. Demographic traits can give us insight into our audience and allow for an audience-centred approach to your assignment that will make you a more effective communicator (Beebe & Beebe, 1997).

Improving Your Perceptions of Your Audience

The better you can understand your audience, the better you can tailor your communications to reach them. To understand them, a key step is to perceive clearly who they are, what they are interested in, what they need, and what motivates them. This ability to perceive is important with audience members from distinct groups, generations, and even cultures. William Seiler and Melissa Beall offer us six ways to improve our perceptions, and therefore improve our communication, particularly in public speaking; they are listed in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1 Perceptual Strategies for Success

Perceptual Strategy	Explanation
Become an active perceiver	You need to actively seek out as much information as possible. Placing yourself in a new culture, group, or co-culture can often expand your understanding.
Recognize each person's unique frame of reference	You and others perceive the world differently. Recognize that even though you may interact with two people from the same culture, they are individuals with their own set of experiences, values, and interests.
Recognize that people, objects, and situations change	The world is changing and so is each individual. Recognizing that people and cultures, like the communication process itself, are dynamic and ever-changing can improve your intercultural communication.
Become aware of the role perceptions play in communication	Perception is an important aspect of the communication process. Understanding that your perceptions are not the only ones possible can limit ethnocentrism and improve intercultural communication.
Keep an open mind	The adage "A mind is like a parachute—it works best when open" holds true. Being open to differences can improve intercultural communication.
Check your perceptions	By learning to observe, and acknowledging your perceptions, you can avoid assumptions, expand your understanding, and improve your ability to communicate across cultures.

Fairness in Communication

Consider that your audience has several expectations of you. No doubt you have sat through a speech or classroom lecture where you asked yourself, "Why should I listen?" You have probably been assigned to read a document or chapter and found yourself wondering, "What does this have to do with me?" These questions are normal and natural for audiences, but people seldom actually state these questions in so many words or say them out loud.

In a report on intercultural communication, V. Lynn Tyler offered insight into these audience expectations, which were summarized as the need to be fair to your audience. One key **fairness** principle is **reciprocity** or a relationship of mutual exchange and interdependence. Reciprocity has four main components: mutuality, non-judgmentalism, honesty, and respect.

Mutuality means that the speaker searches for common ground and understanding with his or her audience, establishing this space, and building on it throughout the speech. This involves examining viewpoints other than your own and taking steps to ensure the speech integrates an inclusive, accessible format rather than an ethnocentric one.

Nonjudgmentalism involves a willingness to examine diverse ideas and viewpoints. A nonjudgmental communicator is open-minded and able to accept ideas that may be strongly opposed to his or her own beliefs and values.

Another aspect of fairness in communication is **honesty**: stating the truth as you perceive it. When you communicate honestly, you provide supporting and clarifying information and give credit to the sources where you obtained the information. In addition, if there is significant evidence opposing your viewpoint, you acknowledge this and avoid concealing it from your audience.

Finally, **fairness** involves respect for the audience and individual members—recognizing that each person has basic rights and is worthy of courtesy. Consider these expectations of fairness when designing your message and you will more thoroughly engage your audience.

To summarize this section, as a presenter or communicator it's very important to understand your audience. You can learn about their demographic traits, such as age, gender, and employment status, as these help determine their interests, needs, and goals. In addition, you can become more aware of your perceptions and theirs, and practice fairness in your communications.

2.4 Conclusion

Reflection Activity

Returning to Abe, who is preparing a presentation for her company's board of directors, how might her presentation be more successful based on what you've learned in this chapter? What type of research might she do to understand her audience better (e.g., board members are often described on organizational websites)? What might she want to examine about her self-perception and confidence in presenting for this audience? What might she need to watch out for as she presents?

Quick Quiz

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=96#h5p-11

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Glossary

Attitude – your immediate disposition toward a concept or an object.

Awareness – what you pay attention to, how you carry out your intentions, and what you remember of your activities and experiences each day.

Beliefs – ideas based on your previous experiences and convictions and may not necessarily be based on logic or fact.

Demographic traits – refer to the characteristics that make someone an individual, but that he or she has in common with others (e.g., age, gender, height, ethnicity).

Difference – ideas or items that are distinct or even opposite from each other.

Fairness – involves respect for the audience and individual members—recognizing that each person has basic rights and is worthy of courtesy.

Honesty – stating the truth as you perceive it.

Interpretation – how you assign meaning to your experiences using mental structures known as schemata.

Looking glass self – how you see yourself reflected in other people's reactions to you and then form your self-concept based on how you believe other people see you.

Mutuality – the speaker searches for common ground and understanding with his or her audience, establishing this space and building on it throughout the speech.

Nonjudgmentalism – involves a willingness to examine diverse ideas and viewpoints.

Organizing – how you sort and categorize information that you perceive based on innate and learned cognitive patterns.

Perception – the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information.

Perceptual field – the world around you (your environment).

Proximity – ideas or physical items that are close together.

Reciprocity – a relationship of mutual exchange and interdependence.

Salience – the degree to which something attracts your attention in a particular context.

Selecting – how you focus your attention on certain incoming sensory information.

Self-esteem – how you feel about yourself; your feelings of self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-respect.

Self-fulfilling prophecy – how your behaviour comes to match and mirror others' expectations (i.e., if others expect you to perform poorly, it's likely that you will).

Self-image – how you see yourself, how you would describe yourself to others.

Similarity – ideas or physical items that share common attributes.

Values – core concepts and ideas of what you consider good or bad, right or wrong, or what is worth the sacrifice.

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CHAPTER 3: INTERCULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Chapter Preview

3.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, learners will be able to:

- Define Culture
- Define intercultural communication
- Discuss the effects of ethnocentrism.
- List several examples of common cultural characteristics.
- Describe international communication and the global marketplace
- Give examples of various styles of management, including Theory X, Y, and Z.

Professional Perspective

Before coming to Canada, Abe worked in Ethiopia. In her studies in Canada she learned about how different countries can be categorized based on their cultural dimensions. She is concerned that business etiquette in her home country is different from that of Canada. For instance, recently she was in a situation where she felt that it was expected of her to shake hands with a male co-worker. This is not an accepted practice in her home cultural context. She worries that there may be many differences between Canadian and Ethiopian cultures and hopes she can navigate the differences and adapt to her new environment.

3.1 Intercultural Communication

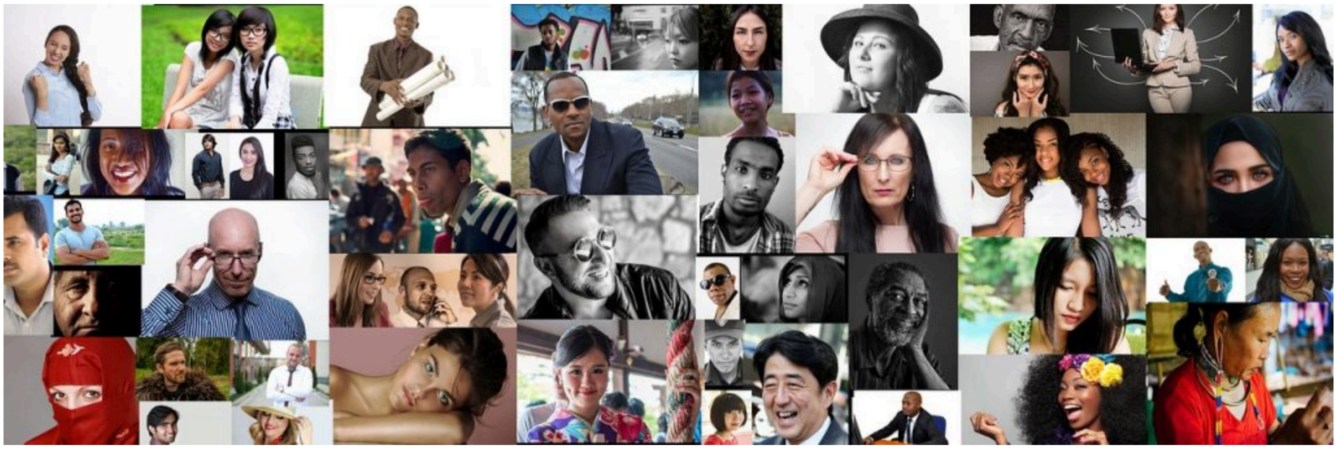


Photo by geralt, Pixabay License

Culture is a complicated word to define, as there are several ways that culture is used in business contexts. For the purposes of this chapter, **culture** is defined as the ongoing negotiation of learned and patterned beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviours. Unpacking the definition, we can see that culture shouldn't be conceptualized as stable and unchanging. Culture is "negotiated," and as you will learn later in this chapter, culture is dynamic, and cultural changes can be traced and analyzed to better understand why our society is the way it is. The definition also points out that culture is learned, which accounts for the importance of socializing institutions like family, school, peers, and the media. Culture is patterned in that there are recognizable widespread similarities among people within a cultural group. There is also deviation from and resistance to those patterns by individuals and subgroups within a culture, which is why cultural patterns change over time. Last, the definition acknowledges that culture influences your beliefs about what is true and false, your attitudes including your likes and dislikes, your values regarding what is right and wrong, and your behaviours. It is from these cultural influences that your identities are formed.

Culture involves beliefs, attitudes, values, and traditions that are shared by a group of people. Thus, you must consider more than the clothes you wear, the movies you watch, or the video games you play, all representations of environment, as culture. Culture also involves the psychological aspects of your expectations of the communication context. From the choice of words (message), to how you communicate (in person, or by email), to how you acknowledge understanding with a nod or a glance (nonverbal feedback), to the internal and external interference, all aspects of communication are influenced by culture.

Watch the following 1 minute video *What is Culture?*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=249#oembed-1

Video: What is Culture? by Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs [1:16] transcript available.

It is through intercultural communication that you come to create, understand, and transform culture and identity. **Intercultural communication** is communication between people with differing cultural identities. One reason you should study intercultural communication is to foster greater self-awareness (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Your thought process regarding culture is often "other focused," meaning that the culture of the other person or group is what stands out in your perception. However, the old adage "know thyself" is appropriate, as you become more aware of your own culture by better understanding other cultures and perspectives. Intercultural communication can allow you to step outside of your comfortable, usual frame of reference and see your culture through a different lens. Additionally, as you become more self-aware, you may also become more ethical communicators as you challenge your **ethnocentrism**, or your tendency to view your own culture as superior to other cultures.

Ethnocentrism makes you far less likely to be able to bridge the gap with others and often increases intolerance of difference. Business and industry are no longer regional, and in your career, you will necessarily cross borders, languages, and cultures. You will need tolerance, understanding, patience, and openness to difference. A skilled business communicator knows that the process of learning is never complete, and being open to new ideas is a key strategy for success.

Communication with yourself is called **intrapersonal** communication, which may also be intracultural, as you may only represent one culture. But most people belong to multiple groups, each with their own culture. Does a conversation with yourself ever involve competing goals, objectives, needs, wants, or values? How did you learn of those goals, or values? Through communication within and between individuals many cultures are represented. You may struggle with the demands of each group and their expectations and could consider this internal struggle intercultural conflict or simply intercultural communication.

Culture is part of the very fabric of our thought, and you cannot separate yourself from it, even as you leave home, defining yourself anew in work and achievements. Every business or organization has a culture, and within what may be considered a global culture, there are many subcultures or co-cultures. For example, consider the difference between the sales and accounting departments in a corporation. You can quickly see two distinct groups with their own symbols, vocabulary, and values. Within each group, there may also be smaller groups, and each member of each department comes from a distinct background that in itself influences behaviour and interaction.

Intercultural communication is a fascinating area of study within business communication, and it is essential to your success. One idea to keep in mind as you examine this topic is the importance of considering multiple points of view. If you tend to dismiss ideas or views that are "unalike culturally," you will find it challenging to learn about diverse cultures. If you cannot learn, how can you grow and be successful?

To summarize, intercultural communication is an aspect of all communicative interactions, and attention to your perspective is key to your effectiveness. Ethnocentrism is a major obstacle to intercultural communication.

How to Understand Intercultural Communication

The American anthropologist Edward T. Hall is often cited as a pioneer in the field of intercultural communication (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Born in 1914, Hall spent much of his early adulthood in the multicultural setting of the American Southwest, where Native Americans, Spanish-speakers, and descendants of pioneers came together from diverse cultural perspectives. He then travelled the globe during World War II and later served as a U.S. State Department official. Where culture had once been viewed by anthropologists as a single, distinct way of living, Hall saw how the perspective of the individual influences interaction. By focusing on interactions rather than cultures as separate from individuals, he asked people to evaluate the many cultures they belong to or are influenced by, as well as those with whom they interacted. While his view makes the study of intercultural communication far more complex, it also brings a healthy dose of reality to the discussion. Hall is generally credited with eight contributions to the study of intercultural communication as follows:

1. *Compare cultures*. Focus on the interactions versus general observations of culture.
2. *Shift to local perspective*. Local level versus global perspective.
3. *You don't have to know everything to know something*. Time, space, gestures, and gender roles can be studied, even if we lack a larger understanding of the entire culture.
4. *There are rules we can learn*. People create rules for themselves in each community that we can learn from, compare, and contrast.
5. *Experience counts*. Personal experience has value in addition to more comprehensive studies of interaction and culture.
6. *Perspectives can differ*. Descriptive linguistics serves as a model to understand cultures, and the U.S. Foreign Service adopted it as a base for training.
7. *Intercultural communication can be applied to international business*. U.S. Foreign Service training yielded applications for trade and commerce and became a point of study for business majors.
8. *Intercultural communication integrates disciplines*. Culture and communication are intertwined and bring together many academic disciplines (Chen & Starosta, 2000; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990; McLean, 2005).

Hall indicated that emphasis on a culture as a whole, and how it operated, might lead people to neglect individual differences. Individuals may hold beliefs or practice customs that do not follow their own cultural norm. When you resort to the mental shortcut of a stereotype, you lose these unique differences. **Stereotypes** can be defined as a generalization about a group of people that oversimplifies their culture (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999).

The American psychologist Gordon Allport explored how, when, and why people formulate or use stereotypes to characterize distinct groups. When you do not have enough contact with people or their cultures to understand them well, you tend to resort to stereotypes (Allport, 1958).

As Hall notes, experience has value. If you do not know a culture, you should consider learning more about it, firsthand if possible. The people you interact with may not be representative of the culture as a whole, but that is not to say that what you learn lacks validity. Quite the contrary; Hall asserts that you can, in fact, learn something without understanding everything, and given the dynamic nature of communication and culture, who is to say that your lessons will not serve you well? Consider a study abroad experience if that is an option for you, or learn from a classmate who comes from a foreign country or an unfamiliar culture. Be open to new ideas and experiences, and start investigating. Many have gone before you, and today, unlike in generations past, much of the information is accessible. Your experiences will allow you to learn about another culture and yourself, and help you to avoid prejudice.

Read the following web article: Avoiding Stereotypes in the Workplace

Prejudice involves a negative preconceived judgment or opinion that guides conduct or social behaviour (McLean, 2005). As an example, imagine two people walking into a room for a job interview. You are tasked to interview both, and having read the previous section, you know that Allport (1958) rings true when he says we rely on stereotypes when encountering people or cultures with which we have had little contact. Will the candidates' dress, age, or gender influence your opinion of them? Will their race or ethnicity be a conscious or subconscious factor in your thinking process? Allport's work would indicate that those factors and more will make you likely to use stereotypes to guide your expectations of them and your subsequent interactions with them.

People who treat other groups or communities with prejudice often make assumptions about those who are different without questioning their own preconceived ideas. As Allport illustrated, you often assume characteristics about groups with which you have little contact. Sometimes you also assume similarity, thinking that people are all basically similar. This denies cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and many other valuable, insightful differences.

In summary, ethnocentric tendencies, stereotyping, and assumptions of similarity can make it difficult to learn about cultural differences.

3.2 Common Cultural Characteristics

Groups come together, form cultures, and grow apart across time. How do you become a member of a community, and how do you know when you are full member? What aspects of culture do people have in common and how do they relate to business communication? Researchers who have studied cultures around the world have identified certain characteristics that define a culture. These characteristics are expressed in different ways, but they tend to be present in nearly all cultures.

Rites of Initiation

Cultures tend to have a ritual for becoming a new member. A newcomer starts out as a nonentity, a stranger, an unaffiliated person with no connection or even possibly awareness of the community. Newcomers who stay around and learn about the culture become members. Most cultures have a rite of initiation that marks the passage of the individual within the community; some of these rituals may be so informal as to be hardly noticed (e.g., the first time a coworker asks you to join the group to eat lunch together), while others may be highly formalized (e.g., the ordination of clergy in a religion). The nonmember becomes a member, the new member becomes a full member, and individuals rise in terms of responsibility and influence.

Across the course of your life, you have no doubt passed several rites of initiation but may not have taken notice of them. Did you earn a driver's license, register to vote, or acquire the permission to purchase alcohol? In North American culture, these three common markers indicate the passing from a previous stage of life to a new one, with new rights and responsibilities.

Rites of initiation mark the transition of the role or status of the individual within the group. Your first day on the job may have been a challenge as you learned your way around the physical space, but the true challenge was to learn how the group members communicate with each other. If you graduate from college with a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, you will already have passed a series of tests, learned terms and theories, and possess a symbol of accomplishment in your diploma, but that only grants you the opportunity to look for a job—to seek access to a new culture.

In every business, there are groups, power struggles, and unspoken ways that members earn their way from the role of a "newbie" to that of a full member. The newbie may get the tough account, the office without a window, or the cubicle next to the bathroom, denoting low status. As the new member learns to navigate through the community—establishing a track record and being promoted—he passes the rite of initiation and acquires new rights and responsibilities.

Over time, the person comes to be an important part of the business, a "keeper of the flame." The "flame" may not exist in physical space or time, but it does exist in the minds of those members in the community who have invested time and effort in the business. It is not a flame to be trusted to a new person, as it can only be earned with time. Along the way, there may be personality conflicts and power struggles over resources and perceived scarcity (e.g., there is only one promotion and everyone wants it). All these challenges are to be expected in any culture.

Common History and Traditions

Think for a moment about the history of a business like Tim Hortons—what are your associations with Tim Horton, the relationship between hockey, coffee, and donuts? Traditions form as the organization grows and expands, and stories are told and retold to educate new members on how business should be conducted. The history of every culture, of every corporation, influences the present. There are times when the phrase "we've tried that before" can become stumbling block for members of the organization as it grows and adapts to new market forces. There may be struggles between members who have weathered many storms and new members, who come armed with new educational perspectives, technological tools, or experiences that may contribute to growth.

Common Values and Principles

Cultures all hold values and principles that are commonly shared and communicated from older members to younger (or newer) ones. Time and length of commitment are associated with an awareness of these values and principles, so that new members, whether they are socialized at home, in school, or at work, may not have a thorough understanding of their importance.

Common Purpose and Sense of Mission

Cultures share a common sense of purpose and mission. Why are we here and whom do we serve? These are fundamental questions of the human condition that philosophers and theologians all over the world have pondered for centuries. In business, the answers to these questions often address purpose and mission, and they can be found in mission and vision statements of almost every organization. Individual members will be expected to acknowledge and share the mission and vision, actualize them, or make them real through action. Without action, the mission and vision statements are simply an arrangement of words. As a guide to individual and group behavioural norms, they can serve as a powerful motivator and a call to action.

For example, Boeing Canada's Purpose and Mission, and Aspiration statements are as follows:

- *Purpose and Mission*: Connect, Protect, Explore, and Inspire the World through Aerospace Innovation
- *Aspiration*: Best in Aerospace and Enduring Global Industrial Champion

Based on these two statements, employees might expect a culture of innovation, quality, and safety as core to their work. What might those concepts mean in your everyday work if you were part of Boeing "culture?"

Common Symbols, Boundaries, Status, Language, and Rituals

Many people learn early in life what a stop sign represents, but not everyone knows what a ten-year service pin on a lapel, or a corner office with two windows means. Cultures have common symbols that mark them as a group; the knowledge of what a symbol stands for helps to reinforce who is a group member and who is not. Cultural symbols include dress, such as the Western business suit and tie. Symbols also include slogans or sayings, such as "Mr. Christie you make good cookies" or "Noooobody". The slogan may serve a marketing purpose but may also embrace a mission or purpose within the culture. Family crests and clan tartan patterns serve as symbols of affiliation. Symbols can also be used to communicate rank and status within a group.

Space is another common cultural characteristic; it may be a nonverbal symbol that represents status and power. In most of the world's cultures, a person occupying superior status is entitled to a physically elevated position—a throne, a dais, a podium from which to address subordinates. Subordinates may be expected to bow, curtsy, or lower their eyes as a sign of respect. In business, the corner office may offer the best view with the most space. Movement from a cubicle to a private office may also be a symbol of transition within an organization, involving increased responsibility as well as power. Parking spaces, the kind of vehicle you drive, and the transportation allowance you have may also serve to communicate symbolic meaning within an organization.

The office serves our discussion on the second point concerning boundaries. Would you sit on your boss's desk or sit in his chair with your feet up on the desk in his presence? Most people indicate they would not, because doing so would communicate a lack of respect, violate normative space expectations, and invite retaliation. Still, subtle challenges to authority may arise in the workplace. A less than flattering photograph of the boss at the office party posted to the recreational room bulletin board communicates more than a lack of respect for authority. By placing the image anonymously in a public place, the prankster clearly communicates a challenge, even if it is a juvenile one. Movement from the cubicle to the broom closet may be the result for someone who is found responsible for the prank. Again, there are no words used to communicate meaning, only symbols, but those symbols represent significant issues.

Communities have their own vocabulary and way in which they communicate. Consider the person who uses a sewing machine to create a dress and the accountant behind the desk; both are professionals and both have specialized jargon used in their field. If they were to change places, the lack of skills would present an obstacle, but the lack of understanding of terms, how they are used, and what they mean would also severely limit their effectiveness. Those terms and how they are used are learned over time and through interaction. While a textbook can help, it cannot demonstrate use in live interactions. Cultures are dynamic systems that reflect the communication process itself.

Cultures celebrate heroes, denigrate villains, and have specific ways of completing jobs and tasks. In business and industry, the emphasis may be on effectiveness and efficiency, but the practice can often be "because that is the way we have always done it." Rituals serve to guide our performance and behaviour and may be limited to small groups or celebrated across the entire company.

Read the following web article: Culture at Work: The Tyranny of 'Unwritten Rules'

To summarize, all cultures have characteristics such as initiations, traditions, history, values and principles, purpose, symbols, and boundaries.

3.3 Divergent Cultural Characteristics

We are not created equal. Cultures reflect this inequality, this diversity, and the divergent range of values, symbols, and meanings across communities. People have viewpoints, and they are shaped by their interactions with communities. Let's examine several points of divergence across cultures.

Individualistic versus Collectivist Cultures

The Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede explored the concepts of individualism and collectivism across diverse cultures (Hofstede, 2005). He found that in individualistic cultures like the United States and Canada, people value individual freedom and personal independence, and perceive their world primarily from their own viewpoint. They perceive themselves as empowered individuals, capable of making their own decisions, and able to make an impact on their own lives.

Cultural viewpoint is not an either/or dichotomy, but rather a continuum or range. You may belong to some communities that express individualistic cultural values, while others place the focus on a collective viewpoint. Collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 1982), including many in Asia and South America, focus on the needs of the nation, community, family, or group of workers. Ownership and private property is one way to examine this difference. In some cultures, property is almost exclusively private, while others tend toward community ownership. The collectively owned resource returns benefits to the community. Water, for example, has long been viewed as a community resource, much like air, but that has been changing as business and organizations have purchased water rights and gained control over resources. How does someone raised in a culture that emphasizes the community interact with someone raised in a primarily individualistic culture? How could tensions be expressed and how might interactions be influenced by this point of divergence? In the following sections these viewpoints will be examined.

Explicit-Rule Cultures versus Implicit-Rule Cultures

Do you know the rules of your business or organization? Did you learn them from an employee manual or by observing the conduct of others? Your response may include both options, but not all cultures communicate rules in the same way. In an explicit-rule culture, where rules are clearly communicated so that everyone is aware of them, the guidelines and agenda for a meeting are announced prior to the gathering. In an implicit-rule culture, where rules are often understood and communicated nonverbally, there may be no agenda. Everyone knows why they are gathered and what role each member plays, even though the expectations may not be clearly stated. Power, status, and behavioural expectations may all be understood, and to the person from outside this culture, it may prove a challenge to understand the rules of the context.

Outsiders often communicate their "otherness" by not knowing where to stand, when to sit, or how to initiate a conversation if the rules are not clearly stated. While it may help to know that implicit-rule cultures are often more tolerant of deviation from the understood rules, the newcomer will be wise to learn by observing quietly—and to do as much research ahead of the event as possible.

Uncertainty-Accepting Cultures versus Uncertainty-Rejecting Cultures

When people meet each other for the first time, they often use what they have previously learned to understand their current context. People also do this to reduce uncertainty. Some cultures, such as the United States and Britain, are highly tolerant of uncertainty, while others go to great lengths to reduce the element of surprise. Cultures in the Arab world, for example, are high in uncertainty avoidance; they tend to be resistant to change and reluctant to take risks. Whereas a U.S. business negotiator might enthusiastically agree to try a new procedure, the Egyptian counterpart would likely refuse to get involved until all the details are worked out.

Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese (1975) developed **Uncertainty Reduction Theory** to examine this dynamic aspect of communication. Here are seven axioms of uncertainty:

1. There is a high level of uncertainty at first. As we get to know one another, our verbal communication increases and our uncertainty begins to decrease.
2. Following verbal communication, nonverbal communication increases, uncertainty continues to decrease, and more nonverbal displays of affiliation, like nodding one's head to indicate agreement, will start to be expressed.
3. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, we tend to increase our information-seeking behaviour, perhaps asking questions to gain more insight. As our understanding increases, uncertainty decreases, as does the information-seeking behaviour.
4. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, the communication interaction is not as personal or intimate. As uncertainty is reduced, intimacy increases.
5. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, communication will feature more reciprocity, or displays of respect. As uncertainty decreases, reciprocity may diminish.
6. Differences between people increase uncertainty, while similarities decrease it.
7. Higher levels of uncertainty are associated with a decrease in the indication of liking the other person, while reductions in uncertainty are associated with liking the other person more.

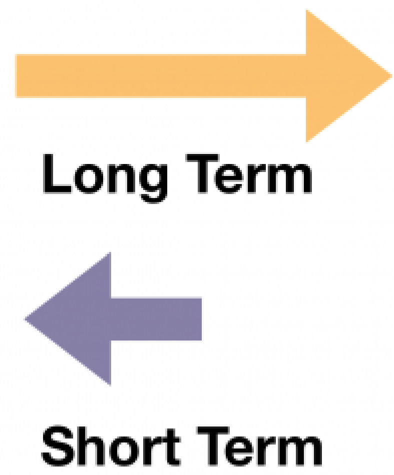
Time Orientation

Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall (1987) state that **monochronic time-oriented cultures** consider one thing at a time, whereas **polychronic time-oriented cultures** schedule many things at one time, and time is considered in a more fluid sense. In **monochronic time**, interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time. Even the multitasker from a monochronic culture will, for example, recognize the value of work first before play or personal time. Canada, Germany, and Switzerland are often noted as countries that value a monochronic time orientation.

Polychronic time looks a little more complicated, with business and family mixing with dinner and dancing. Greece, Italy, Chile, and Saudi Arabia are countries where one can observe this perception of time; business meetings may be scheduled at a fixed time, but when they actually begin may be another story. Also note that the dinner invitation for 8 p.m. may in reality be more like 9 p.m. If you were to show up on time, you might be the first person to arrive and find that the hosts are not quite ready to receive you.

When in doubt, always ask before the event; many people from polychronic cultures will be used to foreigner's tendency to be punctual, even compulsive, about respecting established times for events. The skilled business communicator is aware of this difference and takes steps to anticipate it. The value of time in different cultures is expressed in many ways, and your understanding can help you communicate more effectively.

Short-Term versus Long-Term Orientation



Do you want your reward right now or can you dedicate yourself to a long-term goal? You may work in a culture whose people value immediate results and grow impatient when those results do not materialize. Geert Hofstede discusses this relationship of time orientation to a culture as a "time horizon," and it underscores the perspective of the individual within a cultural context. Many countries in Asia, influenced by the teachings of Confucius, value a long-term orientation, whereas other countries, including Canada, have a more short-term approach to life and results. Indigenous peoples are known for holding a long-term orientation driven by values of deep, long-term reflection and community consultation.

If you work within a culture that has a **short-term orientation**, you may need to place greater emphasis on reciprocation of greetings, gifts, and rewards. For example, if you send a thank-you note the morning after being treated to a business dinner, your host will appreciate your promptness. While there may be a respect for tradition, there is also an emphasis on personal representation and honour, a reflection of identity and integrity. Personal stability and consistency are also valued in a short-term oriented culture, contributing to an overall sense of predictability and familiarity.

Long-term orientation is often marked by persistence, thrift, and frugality, and an order to relationships based on age and status. A sense of shame for the family and community is also observed across generations. What an individual does reflects on the family and is carried by immediate and extended family members.

Masculine versus Feminine Orientation

Hofstede (2011) describes the masculine-feminine dichotomy not in terms of whether men or women hold the power in a given culture, but rather the extent to which that culture values certain traits that may be considered masculine or feminine. Thus, "the assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine.' The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values" (Hofstede, 2011, p.12).

You can observe this difference in where people gather, how they interact, and how they dress. You can see it during business negotiations, where it may make an important difference in the success of the organizations involved. Cultural expectations precede the interaction, so someone who doesn't match those expectations may experience tension. Business in Canada still has a masculine orientation—assertiveness and competition are highly valued. In other cultures, such as Sweden, business values are more attuned to modesty (lack of self-promotion) and taking care of society's undeserved members. This range of difference is one aspect of intercultural communication that requires significant attention when the business communicator enters a new environment.

Read the following web article: A Balance of Both Masculine and Feminine Strengths: The Bottom-Line Benefit

Direct versus Indirect

In Canada, business correspondence is expected to be short and to the point. “What can I do for you?” is a common question when a business person receives a call from a stranger; it is an accepted way of asking the caller to state his or her business. In some cultures it is quite appropriate to make direct personal observation, such as “You’ve changed your hairstyle,” while for others it may be observed, but never spoken of in polite company. In indirect cultures, such as those in Latin America, business conversations may start with discussions of the weather, or family, or topics other than business as the partners gain a sense of each other, long before the topic of business is raised. Again, the skilled business communicator researches the new environment before entering it, as a social faux pas, or error, can have a significant impact.

Materialism versus Relationships

Members of a **materialistic culture** place emphasis on external goods and services as a representation of self, power, and social rank. If you consider the plate of food before you, and consider the labour required to harvest the grain, butcher the animal, and cook the meal, you are focusing more on the relationships involved with its production than the foods themselves. Caviar may be a luxury, and it may communicate your ability to acquire and offer a delicacy, but it also represents an effort. Cultures differ in how they view material objects and their relationship to them, and some value people and relationships more than the objects themselves. The United States and Japan are often noted as materialistic cultures, while many Scandinavian nations feature cultures that place more emphasis on **relationships**.

Low-Power versus High-Power Distance

In **low-power distance cultures**, according to Hofstede (2011), people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant or subordinate roles, regardless of their actual formal roles as employee and manager, for example. In a **high-power distance culture**, you would probably be much less likely to challenge the decision, to provide an alternative, or to give input. If you are working with people from a high-power distance culture, you may need to take extra care to elicit feedback and involve them in the discussion because their cultural framework may preclude their participation. They may have learned that less powerful people must accept decisions without comment, even if they have a concern or know there is a significant problem. Unless you are sensitive to cultural orientation and power distance, you may lose valuable information.

Read the following Harvard Business Review article: Research: The Biggest Culture Gaps Are Within Countries, Not Between Them

To summarize, cultures have distinct orientations when it comes to rules, uncertainty, time and time horizon, masculinity, directness, materialism, and power distance.

3.4 International Communication and the Global Marketplace

In this section, we'll examine intercultural communication from the standpoint of international communication. **International communication** can be defined as communication between nations, but we recognize that nations do not exist independent of people. International communication is typically government to government or, more accurately, governmental representatives to governmental representatives. It often involves topics and issues that relate to the nations as entities, broad issues of trade, and conflict resolution. People use political, legal, and economic systems to guide and regulate behaviour, and diverse cultural viewpoints necessarily give rise to many variations. Ethical systems also guide behaviour, but often in less formal, institutional ways. Together these areas form much of the basis of international communication, and warrant closer examination.

Fig 3.1 Components of the Global Village

Political Systems

You may be familiar with democracy, or rule by the people; and theocracy, or rule of God by his or her designates; but the world presents a diverse range of how people are governed. It is also important to note, as we examine political systems, that they are created, maintained, and changed by people. Just as people change over time, so do all systems that humans create. A political climate that was once closed to market forces, including direct and indirect investment, may change over time.

Political systems are often framed in terms of how people are governed, and the extent to which they may participate. Democracy is one form of government that promotes the involvement of the individual, but even here we can observe stark differences. In Canada, people are encouraged to vote, but it is not mandatory. When voter turn out is low, voting minorities might have greater influence on the larger political systems. In Chile, voting is mandatory, so that all individuals are expected to participate, with adverse consequences if they do not. This doesn't mean there are not still voting minorities or groups with disproportionate levels of influence and power, but it does underscore cultural values and their many representations.

Centralized rule of the people also comes in many forms. In a dictatorship, the dictator establishes and enforces the rules with few checks and balances, if any. In a totalitarian system, one party makes the rules. The Communist states of the twentieth century (although egalitarian in theory) were ruled in practice by a small central committee. In a theocracy, one religion makes the rules based on their primary documents or interpretation of them, and religious leaders hold positions of political power. In each case, political power is centralized to a small group over the many.

A third type of political system is anarchy, in which there is no government. A few places in the world, notably Somalia, may be said to exist in a state of anarchy. But even in a state of anarchy, the lack of a central government means that local warlords, elders, and others exercise a certain amount of political, military, and economic power. The lack of an established governing system itself creates the need for informal power structures that regulate behaviour and conduct, set and promote ideals, and engage in commerce and trade, even if that engagement involves nonstandard strategies such as the appropriation of ships via piracy. In the absence of appointed or elected leaders, emergent leaders will rise as people attempt to meet their basic needs.

Legal Systems

Legal systems also vary across the planet and come in many forms. Some legal systems promote the rule of law while others promote the rule of culture, including customs, traditions, and religions. The two most common systems are civil and common law. In civil law the rules are spelled out in detail, and judges are responsible for applying the law to the given case. In common law, the judge interprets the law and considers the concept of precedent, or previous decisions. Common law naturally adapts to changes in technology and modern contexts as precedents accumulate, while civil law requires new rules to be written out to reflect the new context even as the context transforms and changes. Civil law is more predictable and is practised in the majority of countries, while common law involves more interpretation that can produce conflict with multiple views on the application of the law in question. The third type of law draws its rules from a theological base rooted in religion. This system presents unique challenges to the outsider, and warrants thorough research.

Economic Systems

Economic systems vary in similar ways across cultures, and again reflect the norms and customs of people. Economies are often described on the relationship between people and their government. An economy with a high degree of government intervention may prove challenging for both internal and external businesses. An economy with relatively little government oversight may be said to reflect more of the market(s) and to be less restricted. Along these same lines, government may perceive its role as a representative of the common good, to protect individual consumers, and to prevent fraud and exploitation.

This continuum or range, from high to low degrees of government involvement, reflects the concept of government itself. A government may be designed to give everyone access to the market, with little supervision, in the hope that people will regulate transactions based on their own needs, wants, and desires; in essence, their own self-interest. If everyone operates in one's self-interest and word gets out that one business produces a product that fails to work as advertised, it is often believed that the market will naturally gravitate away from this faulty product to a competing product that works properly. Individual consumers, however, may have a hard time knowing which product to have faith in and may look to government to provide that measure of safety.

Government certification of food, for example, attempts to reduce disease. Meat from unknown sources would lack the seal of certification, alerting the consumer to evaluate the product closely or choose another product. From meat to financial products, we can see both the dangers and positive attributes of intervention and can also acknowledge that its application may be less than consistent. Some cultures that value the community may naturally look to their government for leadership in economic areas, while those that represent an individualistic tendency may take a more "hands off" approach.

Ethical Systems

Ethical systems, unlike political, legal, and economic systems, are generally not formally institutionalized. This does not imply, however, that they are less influential in interactions, trade, and commerce. Ethics refers to a set of norms and principles that relate to individual and group behaviour, including businesses and organizations. They may be explicit, in the form of an organization's code of conduct; or may reflect cultural values in law. What is legal and what is ethical are at times quite distinct.

Review the following link to the Canadian Certified Professional Accountant (CPA) Code of Professional Conduct

Some cultures have systems of respect and honour that require tribute and compensation for service, while others may view payment as a form of bribe. It may be legal in one country to make a donation or support a public official in order to gain influence over a decision, but it may be unethical. In some countries, it may be both illegal and unethical. Given the complexity of human values and their expression across behaviours, it is wise to research the legal and ethical norms of the place or community where you want to do business.

Global Village

International trade has advantages and disadvantages, again based on your viewpoint and cultural reference. If you come from a traditional culture, with strong gender norms and codes of conduct, you may not appreciate the importation of some Western television programs that promote what you consider to be content that contradicts your cultural values. You may also take the viewpoint from a basic perspective and assert that basic goods and services that can only be obtained through trade pose a security risk. If you cannot obtain the product or service, it may put you, your business, or your community at risk.

Furthermore, "just in time" delivery methods may produce shortages when the systems break down due to weather, transportation delays, or conflict. People come to know each other through interactions (and transactions are fundamental to global trade), but cultural viewpoints may come into conflict. Some cultures may want a traditional framework to continue and will promote their traditional cultural values and norms at the expense of innovation and trade. Other cultures may come to embrace diverse cultures and trade, only to find that they have welcomed some who wish to do harm. In a modern world, transactions have a cultural dynamic that cannot be ignored.

Intercultural communication and business have been related since the first exchange of value. People, even from the same community, had to arrive at a common understanding of value. Symbols, gestures, and even language reflect these values. Attention to this central concept will enable the skilled business communicator to look beyond their own viewpoint.

It was once the privilege of the wealthy to travel, and the merchant or explorer knew firsthand what many could only read about. Now we can take virtual tours of locations we may never travel to, and as the cost of travel decreases, we can increasingly see the world for ourselves. As global trade has developed, and time to market has decreased, the world has effectively grown smaller. While the size has not changed, our ability to navigate has been dramatically decreased.

Time and distance are no longer the obstacles they once were. The Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan, a pioneer in the field of communication, predicted what we now know as the "global village." The global village is characterized by information and transportation technologies that reduce the time and space required to interact (McLuhan, 1964).

In summary, people create political, legal, economic, and ethical systems to guide them in transacting business domestically and internationally.

3.5 Styles of Management

People and their relationships to dominant and subordinate roles are a reflection of culture and cultural viewpoint. They are communicated through experience and create expectations for how and when managers interact with employees. The three most commonly discussed management theories are often called X, Y, and Z. The three theories and their influence on intercultural communication will be described below.

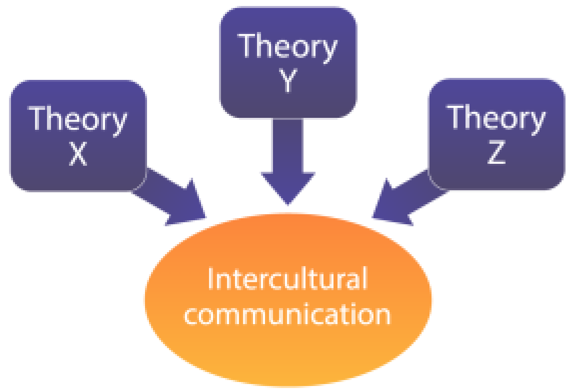


Fig 3.2 "Intercultural communication" adapted by Fanshawe College, CC BY 4.0 (re-coloured).

Theory X

In an influential book titled *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), M.I.T. management professor Douglas McGregor described two contrasting perceptions on how and why people work, formulating Theory X and Theory Y; they are both based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954; Maslow, 1970). According to this model, people are concerned first with physical needs (e.g., food, shelter) and second with safety. At the third level, people seek love, acceptance, and intimacy. Self-esteem, achievement, and respect are the fourth level. Finally, the fifth level embodies self-actualization.

Watch the following 5 minute video: *McGregor's Theory* X *and* Y.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=261#oembed-1

Video: McGregor's Theory X & Y by Jessica Blaisdell [5:05] transcript available

Theory X asserts that workers are motivated by their basic (low-level) needs and have a general disposition against labour. In this viewpoint, workers are considered lazy and predicted to avoid work if they can, giving rise to the perceived need for constant, direct supervision.

A Theory X manager may be described as authoritarian or autocratic, and does not seek input or feedback from employees. He or she may use control and incentive programs to provide punishment and reward.

In **Theory Y** employees are described as ambitious, self-directed, and capable of self-motivation.

A Theory Y manager determines that a job well done is reward in and of itself, and the employee may be a valuable source of feedback. Collaboration is viewed as normal, and the worker may need little supervision.

Theory Z takes the view that workers are seen as having a high need for reinforcement, where belonging is emphasized.

In Theory Z management, workers are trusted to do their jobs with excellence and supervisors are trusted to support them (Massie & Douglas, 1992).

Each of these theories of management features a viewpoint with assumptions about people and why they do what they do. While each has been the subject of debate, and variations on each have been introduced across organizational communication and business, they serve as a foundation for understanding management in an intercultural context.

Management Theories X, Y, and Z are examples of distinct and divergent views on worker motivation, need for supervision, and the possibility of collaboration.

3.6 Conclusion

Reflection Activity

After learning more about cultural differences in business contexts, what advice do you have for Abe, where her country of origin culture and customs are different from the new Canadian customs she encounters? Should she assimilate and just shake hands with male colleagues? If it's important for her to maintain some of her customs, how might she communicate about that with her new colleagues?

Check Your Understanding

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Glossary

Culture – the ongoing negotiation of learned and patterned beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviours.

Direct cultures – communication is more open and frank; business conversations can get straight to the point without first spending time on informal conversation.

Ethnocentrism – the tendency to view one's own culture as superior to other cultures.

Feminine orientation – a cultural value of modest, caring values.

High-power distance culture – there are clear hierarchies of power, especially in manager-subordinate organizational roles. You may need to take extra care to elicit feedback and involve senior administrators in discussion because their cultural framework may preclude their participation.

Indirect cultures – communication is less direct and people may "beat around the bush" rather than saying exactly what they mean; conversations may start with extended "small talk" before getting down to business.

Intercultural Communication – communication between people with differing cultural identities.

International communication – communication between nations, or two or more people from different nations.

Intrapersonal Communication – communication with yourself or our internal dialogue.

Long-term orientation – cultures focused on future rewards; often marked by persistence, thrift and frugality, and an order to relationships based on age and status.

Low-power distance culture – people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant or subordinate roles.

Masculine orientation – a cultural value of assertive and competitive behaviour.

Materialistic culture – members place emphasis on external goods and services as a representation of self, power, and social rank.

Monochromatic time – interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time.

Monochronic Time-Oriented Cultures – cultures focused on time and schedules; interruptions are to be avoided and the focus is on one thing at a time.

Polychromatic time – more complicated, with business and family mixing with dinner and dancing, events do not necessarily start on time.

Polychronic Time-Oriented Cultures – time is more fluid and many things can be focused on at one time; events do not necessarily start on time; people are more important than schedules.

Political systems – framed in terms of how people are governed, and the extent to which they may participate.

Prejudice involves a negative preconceived judgment or opinion that guides conduct or social behaviour.

Relationship cultures – value people and relationships more than material objects.

Rites of Initiation – marks the passage of the individual to become part of the community.

Short-term orientation – a culture whose people value immediate results and grow impatient when those results do not materialize.

Space – a common cultural characteristic; it may be a nonverbal symbol that represents status and power.

Stereotypes – a generalization about a group of people that oversimplifies their culture; an assumption that everyone in the group has the same traits, behaviours, etc.

Theory X – workers are motivated by their basic needs and have a general disposition against labour.

Theory Y – employees are ambitious, self-directed, and capable of self-motivation.

Theory Z – works have a high need for reinforcement, where belonging is emphasized.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory – a theory on how people use communication to reduce uncertainty.

Additional Resources

World Business Culture: Your Guide to Doing Business Around the World

InterNations: Cultural Differences in Business

Cultures at Work: Intercultural Communication in the Canadian Workplace by Ana Maria Fantino (2006)

Conestoga College: Welcome to Intercultural Communication

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CHAPTER 4: LANGUAGE

Chapter Preview

4.0 Introduction

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this chapter, learners will be able to:

- Define language and describe its role in the communication process.
- Give examples of how language can be a barrier to communication.
- Demonstrate professional communication related to gender and race.
- Give examples of nonverbal communication and describe its role in the communication process.
- Explain the principles of nonverbal communication.
- Describe the similarities and differences among eight general types of nonverbal communication.
- Demonstrate how to use movement to increase the effectiveness of your message.
- Demonstrate three ways to improve nonverbal communication.

Professional Perspective

Raised in Ethiopia, Abe's first language is Arabic. Although she spoke English fluently and completed her MBA in Canada, she still has some difficulty understanding jargon and slang. She wants to participate in more collegial conversations in her new role. As you read this chapter consider some of how Abe's colleagues might support her to practice engaging, informal conversation.

Dhavit is getting some feedback from his team that facilitation participants think he is angry or upset during question and answer sessions. One of his colleagues has noticed that Dhavit's arms are often crossed when concerns are being raised, and his facial expression sometimes indicates that he feels threatened by criticisms of organizational systems. As you read through this chapter, consider what might be happening and how Dhavit might adjust his facial expressions and body language as part of dialogue with staff members.

4.1 What is Language?

Reminder from Chapter One – Communication is the process of understanding and sharing meaning (Pearson & Nelson, 2000).

How do you communicate? What do you think? We use language as a system to create and exchange meaning with one another, and the types of words we use influence both our perceptions and others' interpretations of our meanings. What kinds of words would you use to describe your thoughts and feelings, your preferences in music, cars, food, or other things that matter to you?

Watch the following 10-minute video featuring psychologist Steven Pinker describing the intricacies of language.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=55#oembed-1

Video: RSA ANIMATE: Language as a Window into Human Nature by RSA Animate [10:53] transcript available

In this chapter, you will learn more about the importance of delivering your message in words. You will explore how the characteristics of language interact in ways that can both improve and diminish effective business communication. You will examine how language plays a significant role in how you perceive and interact with the world, and how culture, language, education, gender, race, and ethnicity all influence this dynamic process. You will look at ways to avoid miscommunication and focus on constructive ways to get your message delivered to your receiver with the meaning you intended.

Language is a system of symbols, words, and/or gestures used to communicate meaning.

People are raised in different cultures, with different values, beliefs, customs, and different languages to express those cultural attributes. Even people who speak the same language, like speakers of English in London, New Delhi, or Calgary, speak and interact using their own words that are community-defined, self-defined, and have room for interpretation.

This variation in our use of language is a creative way to form relationships and communities, but can also lead to miscommunication.

Words themselves, then, actually hold no meaning. It takes at least two people to use them, to give them life and purpose. Words change meaning over time. The dictionary entry for the meaning of a word changes because we change, and multiple meanings can lead to miscommunication.

Read the following web page about [20 Words that Once Meant Something Very Different.]()

Languages are living exchange systems of meaning and are bound by context. If you are assigned to a team that coordinates with suppliers from Shanghai, China, and a sales staff in London, Ontario you may encounter terms from both groups that influence your team.

Triangle of Meaning

The **triangle of meaning** is a model of communication that indicates the relationship among a thought, symbol, and referent and highlights the indirect relationship between the symbol and referent (Ogden & Richards, 1932). As represented in Figure 4.1 below, the *thought* is the concept or idea a person references. The ***symbol*** is the word that represents the thought, and the *referent* is the object or idea to which the symbol refers. This model is useful for you as a communicator because when you are aware of the indirect relationship between symbols and referents, you are aware of how common misunderstandings occur, as the following example illustrates:

Triangle of Meaning Example

Jasper and Abby have been thinking about getting a new dog. So each of them is having a similar thought. They are each using the same symbol, the word dog, to communicate their thought. Their referents, however, are different. Jasper is thinking about a small dog like a dachshund, and Abby is thinking about an Australian shepherd. Since the word dog doesn't refer to one specific object in our reality, it is possible for them to have the same thought, and use the same symbol, but end up in an awkward moment when they get to the shelter and fall in love with their respective referents only to find out the other person didn't have the same thing in mind. Abby could ask questions for clarification, like "Sounds like you're saying that a smaller dog might be better. Is that right?" Getting to a place of shared understanding can be difficult, even when we define our symbols and describe our referents.

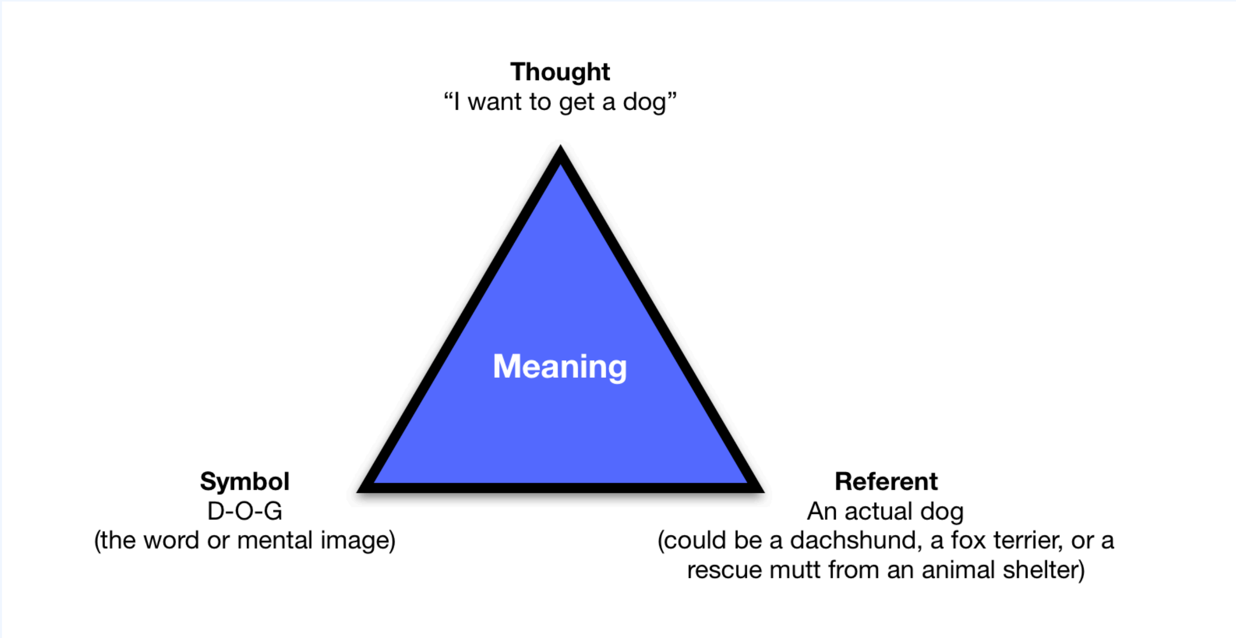


Figure 4.1. The triangle of meaning. This figure illustrates a symbol and referent in relation to a thought (Adapted from Ogden & Richards, 1932).

4.2 Principles of Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is based on several basic principles. In this section, you'll examine each principle and explore how it influences everyday communication. Whether it's a simple conversation with a coworker or a formal sales presentation to a board of directors, these principles apply to all contexts of communication.

Language Has Rules

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, **language** is a system of **symbols**, **words**, and/or **gestures** used to communicate meaning.

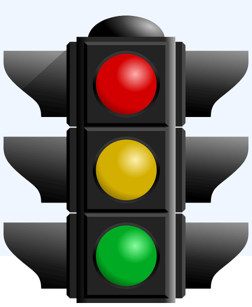
The words themselves have meaning within their specific context or language community. **Words** only carry meaning if you know the understood meaning and have a grasp of their context to interpret them correctly.

There are three types of rules that govern or control your use of words.

1. **Syntactic Rules** – govern the order of words in a sentence.
2. **Semantic Rules** – govern the meaning of words and how to interpret them (Martinich, 1996).
3. **Contextual Rules** – govern meaning and word choice according to **context** and social custom.

Language Rules Example

Consider the example of a traffic light as follows:



Semantics – Green means Go, and Red means Stop

Syntax – Green is on the bottom, yellow in the middle, and red on top.

Even when you follow these linguistic rules, miscommunication is possible. Your cultural context or community may hold different meanings for the words used – different from meanings that the source communicator intended. Words attempt to represent the ideas you want to communicate, but they are sometimes limited by factors beyond your control. Words often require you to negotiate meaning or to explain what you mean in more than one way, in order to create a common vocabulary. You may need to state a word, define it, and provide an example in order to come to an understanding with your audience about the meaning of your message.

As discussed previously, words, by themselves, do not have any inherent meaning. Humans give meaning to them, and their meanings change across time. The arbitrary symbols, including letters, numbers, and punctuation marks, stand for concepts in your experience. You have to negotiate the meaning of the word “home,” and define it, through visual images or dialogue, in order to communicate with your audience.

Words have two types of meanings: denotative and connotative.

- **Denotative** – The common meaning, often found in the dictionary.
- **Connotative** – Meaning that is not found in the dictionary but in the community of users itself. It can involve an emotional association with a word, positive or negative, and can be individual or collective, but is not universal.

With a common vocabulary in both denotative and connotative terms, effective communication becomes a more distinct possibility. But what if you have to transfer meaning from one vocabulary to another? That is essentially what you are doing when you translate a message. For example, HSBC Bank was forced to rebrand its entire global private banking operations after bringing a U.S. campaign overseas. In 2009, the worldwide bank spent millions of dollars to scrap its 5-year-old “Assume Nothing” campaign. Problems arose when the message was brought overseas, where it was translated in many countries as “Do Nothing.” In the end, the bank spent $10 million to change its tagline to “The world’s private bank,” which has a much friendlier translation.

Read the following article for a few more examples of organizational messaging challenges: International Marketing Fails

Language Organizes and Classifies Reality

Humans use language to create and express some sense of order in their world. You often group words that represent concepts by their physical proximity or their similarity to one another. For example, in biology, animals with similar traits are classified together. An ostrich may be said to be related to an emu and a nandu, but you wouldn’t group an ostrich with an elephant or a salamander. Your ability to organize is useful but artificial. The systems of organization you use are not part of the natural world but an expression of your views about the natural world.

What is a doctor? A nurse? A teacher? If a male came to mind in the case of the word ‘doctor’ and a female came to mind in reference to ‘nurse’ or ‘teacher’, then your habits of mind include a gender bias. In many cultures, there was a time where gender stereotypes were more than just stereotypes, they were the general rule, the social custom, and the norm. But now, in many places in the world, this is no longer true. More and more men are training to serve as nurses. In 2019, for example, data from the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) indicated that 43% of practising physicians in Canada were women (Canadian Medical Association, 2023).

You use systems of classification to help you navigate the world. Imagine how confusing life would be if you had no categories such as male/female, young/old, tall/short, doctor/nurse/teacher. While these categories are mentally useful, they can become problematic when you use them to uphold biases and ingrained assumptions that are no longer valid. You may assume, through your biases, that elements are related when they have no relationship at all. As a result, your thinking may become limited and your grasp of reality impaired. It is often easier to spot these biases in others, but it is important as an effective communicator to become aware of them in yourself. Holding biases unconsciously will limit your thinking, your grasp of reality, and your ability to communicate successfully.

4.3 Language Can be an Obstacle to Communication

In the past when you have used language to make sense of your experiences, and to take part in discussions, you no doubt came to see that language and verbal communication could work for you…and sometimes against you. Language allowed you to communicate, but it also allowed you to miscommunicate and misunderstand.

In an article titled *The Miscommunication Gap*, Susan Washburn (2008) lists several undesirable results of poor communication in business:

- Damaged relationships
- Loss of productivity
- Inefficiency and rework
- Conflict
- Missed opportunities
- Schedule slippage (delays, missed deadlines)
- Scope creep…or leap (gradual or sudden changes in an assignment that make it more complex and difficult than it was originally understood to be)
- Wasted resources
- Unclear or unmet requirements

Watch the following 4 minute video on miscommunication:
How miscommunication happens (and how to avoid it) – Katherine Hampsten

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=69#oembed-1

Video: How miscommunication happens (and how to avoid it) by TED-Ed [4:32] transcript available

In the following section you will explore how words can serve either as a bridge, or a barrier, to understanding and conveying meaning. Your goals of effective and efficient business communication require words and terms that keep the bridge clear and free of obstacles. Review the six barriers to communication in Figure 4.2 as follows:

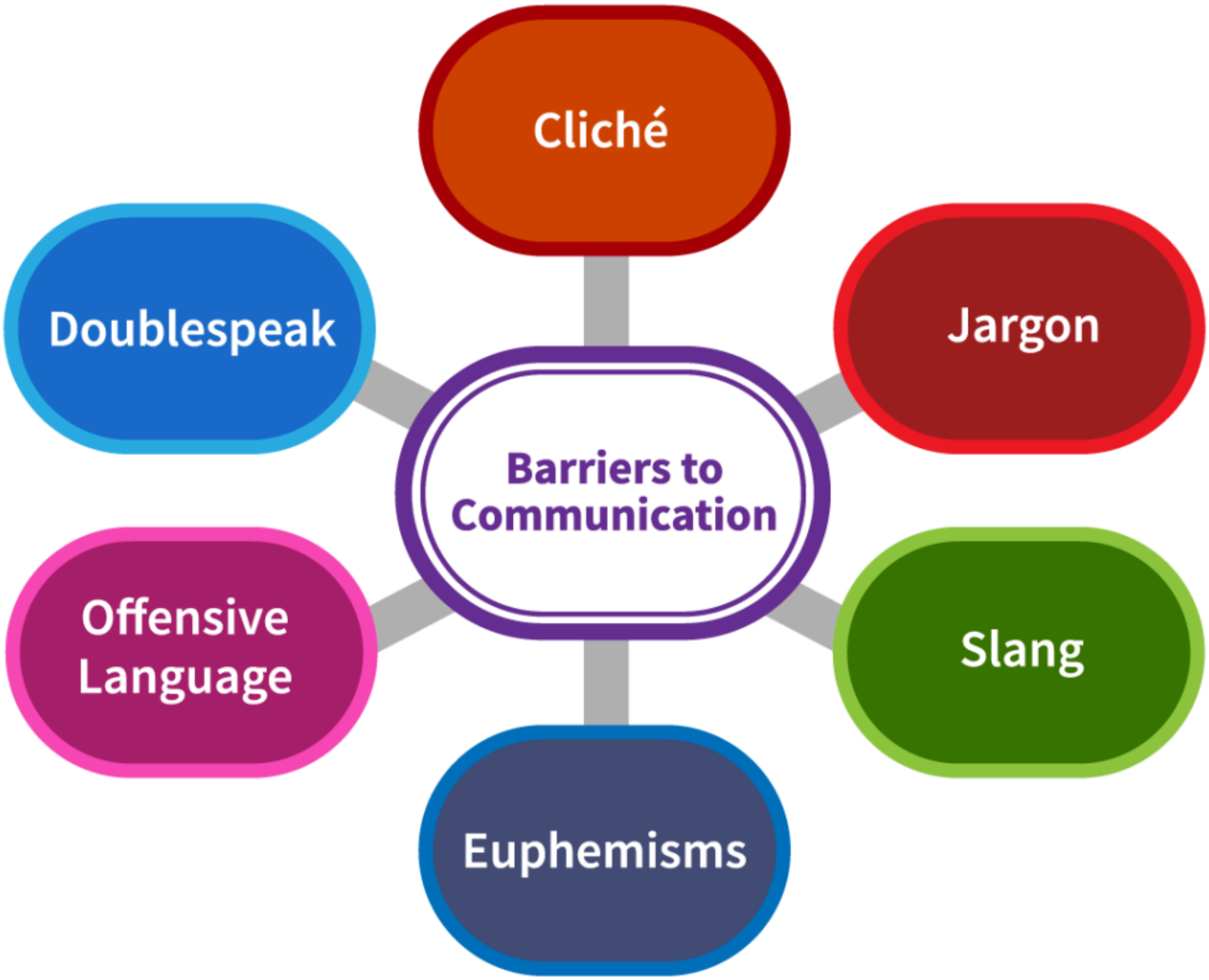


Figure 4.2. Barriers to communication.

- **Cliché** – cultural references that often make no sense in other cultures. For example, "A cliché is something to avoid like the plague, for it is nothing but a tired old war horse, and if the shoe were on the other foot you too would have an axe to grind."
- **Jargon** – Occupation-specific language used by people in a given profession. Jargon does not necessarily imply formal education, but instead focuses on the language people in a profession use to communicate with each other.
- **Slang** – The use of existing or newly invented words to take the place of standard or traditional words with the intent of adding an unconventional, nonstandard, humorous, or rebellious effect. It differs from jargon in that it is used in informal contexts, among friends or members of a certain age group, rather than by professionals in a

certain industry.

- **Euphemism** – Involves substituting an acceptable word for an offensive, controversial, or unacceptable one that conveys the same or similar meaning.
- **Doublespeak** – The deliberate use of words to disguise, obscure, or change meaning.
- **Offensive Language** – Some language is offensive and has no place in the workplace. It may even be a violation of company policy.

Each of these six barriers to communication contributes to misunderstanding and miscommunication, intentionally or unintentionally. If you recognize one of them, you can address it right away. You can redirect a question and get to essential meaning, rather than leaving with a misunderstanding that might impact a business relationship. In business communication, your goal of clear and concise communication should remain constant. *Never forget that trust is the foundation for effective communication.*

Part of your effort must include reinforcing the relationship inherent between source and receiver. One effective step toward that goal is to reduce obstacles to effective communication. The more you can learn about your audience, the better you can tailor your chosen words. If you lack information or want your document to be understood by a variety of readers, it pays to use common words and avoid jargon. This is known as actively bridging communication to help ensure your audience clearly understands your intended message.

Read the following 5-minute article from the UK Telegraph titled: Revealed: The 10 most scream-inducing business jargon phrases

Review the following 3-minute video on YouTube titled: ***Office Jargon by Nina Millns***

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=69#oembed-2

Video: Office Jargon by Nina Millns [3:13] Transcript

To summarize, in order to defuse common obstacles to communication, avoid clichés, jargon, slang, sexist and racist language, euphemisms, and doublespeak.

4.4 Principles of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication has a distinct history and serves separate evolutionary functions from verbal communication. For example, nonverbal communication is primarily biologically based while verbal communication is primarily culturally based. This is evidenced by the fact that some nonverbal communication has the same meaning across cultures while no verbal communication systems share that same universal recognizability (Andersen, 1999). Nonverbal communication also evolved earlier than verbal communication and served an early and important survival function that helped humans later develop verbal communication. While some of our nonverbal communication abilities, like our sense of smell, lost strength as our verbal capacities increased, other abilities like paralanguage and movement have grown alongside verbal complexity. The fact that nonverbal communication is processed by an older part of our brain makes it more instinctual and involuntary than verbal communication.

Watch the following 3 minute video from body language expert Mark Bowden to extend your learning about nonverbal communication.

Please watch this video featuring body language expert Mark Bowden:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=103#oembed-1

Video: World Renowned Body Language Expert —Top Keynote Speaker by Mark Bowden [2:59] Transcript Available

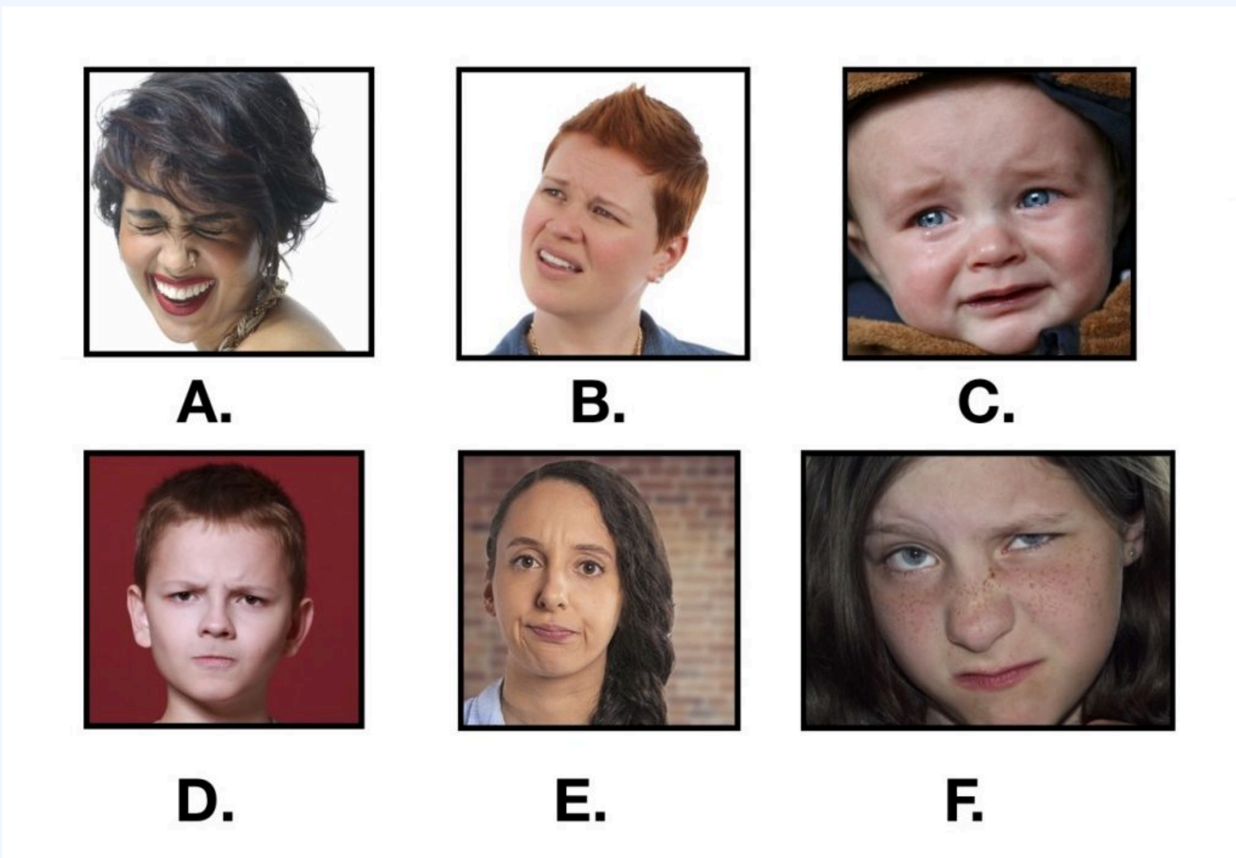
Nonverbal Communication Is Fluid

Chances are you have had many experiences where words were misunderstood, or where the meaning of words was unclear. When it comes to nonverbal communication, meaning is even harder to discern. You can sometimes tell what people are communicating through their nonverbal communication, but there is no foolproof "dictionary" of how to interpret nonverbal messages.

Nonverbal communication is the process of conveying a message without the use of words. It can include **gestures** and facial expressions, tone of voice, timing, posture and where you stand as you communicate. It can help or hinder the clear understanding of your message, but it doesn't reveal (and can even mask) what you are really thinking. Nonverbal communication is far from simple, and its complexity makes your study and your understanding a worthy but challenging goal.

Nonverbal communication involves the entire body, the space it occupies and dominates, the time it interacts, and not only what is not said, but how it is not said. Confused? Try to focus on just one element of nonverbal communication and it will soon get lost among all the other stimuli. Consider one element, facial expressions. What do they mean without the extra context of chin position, or eyebrows to flag interest or signal a threat? Nonverbal action flows almost seamlessly from one movement to the next, making it a challenge to interpret one element, or even a series of elements. How well can you correctly identify the feelings behind facial expressions?

The following series of images show people with a variety of facial expressions, what does each one represent? (The answer key is at the end of this section).



You may perceive time as linear, flowing along in a straight line. You do one task, you're doing another task now, and you are planning on doing something else all the time. Sometimes you place more emphasis on the future, or the past, forgetting that you are actually living in the present moment whether you focus on "the now" or not. Nonverbal communication is always in motion, as long as you are, and is never the same twice.

Nonverbal communication is irreversible. In written communication, you can write a clarification, correction, or retraction. While it never makes the original statement go completely away, it does allow for correction. Unlike written communication, oral communication may allow "do-overs" on the spot: you can explain and restate, hoping to clarify your point. In your experience, you've likely said something you would give anything to take back, and you've learned the hard way that you can't. Oral communication, like written communication, allows for some correction, but it still doesn't erase the original message or its impact. Nonverbal communication takes it one step further. You can't separate one nonverbal action from the context of all the other verbal and nonverbal communication acts, and you can't take it back.

In a speech, nonverbal communication is continuous in the sense that it is always occurring, and because it is so fluid, it can be hard to determine where one nonverbal message starts and another stops. Words can be easily identified and isolated, but if you try to single out a speaker's gestures, smile, or stance without looking at how they all come together in context, you may miss the point and draw the wrong conclusion. You need to be conscious of this aspect of public speaking because, to quote an old saying, "Actions speak louder than words." This is true in the sense that people often pay more attention to your nonverbal expressions more than your words. As a result, nonverbal communication is a powerful way to contribute to (or detract from) your success in communicating your message to the audience.

Answer Key for Facial Recognition Activity

A: Joyful; B: Confused; C: Sad; D: Angry; E: Annoyed; F: Disgusted

Nonverbal Communication Is Fast

Nonverbal communication gives your thoughts and feelings away before you are even aware of what you are thinking or how you feel. People may see and hear more than you ever anticipated. Your nonverbal communication includes both intentional and unintentional messages, but since it all happens so fast, the unintentional ones can contradict what you know you are supposed to say or how you are supposed to react.

Nonverbal Communication Can Add to or Replace Verbal Communication

People tend to pay more attention to how you say something rather than what you actually say. You communicate nonverbally more than you engage in verbal communication, and often use nonverbal expressions to add to, or even replace, words you might otherwise say.

You use a nonverbal gesture called an illustrator to communicate your message effectively and reinforce your point. For example, you might use hand gestures to indicate the size or shape of an object to someone. Think about how you gesture when having a phone conversation, even though the other person can't see you, there's an important unconscious element to nonverbal communication.

Unlike gestures, emblems are gestures that have a specific agreed-on meaning, like when someone raises their thumb to indicate agreement. Many cultures have a variety of different nonverbal emblems. It is important to remember that emblems do not have the same meaning across all cultures; for example, the "thumbs up" emblem can be extremely offensive, depending on your cultural background.

In addition to illustrators or emblematic nonverbal communication, you also use regulators. "Regulators are nonverbal messages which control, maintain or discourage interaction" (McLean, 2003). For example, if someone is telling you a message that is confusing or upsetting, you may hold up your hand, a commonly recognized regulator that asks the speaker to stop talking.

Let's say you are in a meeting presenting a speech that introduces your company's latest product. If your audience members nod their heads in agreement on important points and maintain good eye contact, it is a good sign. Nonverbally, they are using regulators encouraging you to continue with your presentation. In contrast, if they look away, tap their feet, and begin drawing in the margins of their notebook, these are regulators suggesting that you better think of a way to regain their interest or else wrap up your presentation quickly.

"Affect displays are nonverbal communication that express emotions or feelings" (McLean, 2003). An affect display that might accompany holding up your hand for silence would be to frown and shake your head from side to side. When you and a colleague are at a restaurant, smiling and waving at coworkers as they arrive lets them know where you are seated and welcomes them.

"*I Hate Bad Hair Days*" *by Matthew*, *CC BY-NC-ND 4.0*

"Adaptors are displays of nonverbal communication that help you adapt to your environment and each context, helping you feel comfortable and secure" (McLean, 2003). A self-adaptor involves you meeting your need for security, by playing with your hair for example, by adapting something about yourself in way for which it was not designed or for no apparent purpose. Combing your hair would be an example of a purposeful action, unlike a self-adaptive behaviour.

An object-adaptor involves the use of an object in a way for which it was not designed. You may see audience members tapping their pencils, chewing on them, or playing with them, while ignoring you and your presentation. This is an example of an object-adaptor that communicates a lack of engagement or enthusiasm for your speech.

Intentional nonverbal communication can complement, repeat, replace, mask, or contradict what we say. When a friend invites you to join them for a meal, you may say "Yeah" and nod, complementing and repeating the message. You could have simply nodded, effectively replacing the "yes" with a nonverbal response. You could also have decided to say no, but did not want to hurt your friend's feelings. Shaking your head "no" while pointing to your watch, communicating work and time issues, may mask your real thoughts or feelings. Masking involves the substitution of appropriate nonverbal communication for potentially negative nonverbal communication you may want to display (McLean, 2003).

Finally, nonverbal messages that conflict with verbal communication can confuse the listener. Table 4.1 below summarizes these concepts.

Table 4.1 – Some Nonverbal Expressions

Term	Definition
Adaptors	Help us feel comfortable or indicate emotions or moods
Affect Displays	Express emotions or feelings
Complementing	Reinforcing verbal communication
Contradicting	Contradicting verbal communication
Emblems	Nonverbal gestures that carry a specific meaning, and can replace or reinforce words
Illustrators	Reinforce a verbal message
Masking	Substituting more appropriate displays for less appropriate displays
Object-adaptors	Using an object for a purpose other than its intended design
Regulators	Control, encourage or discourage interaction
Repeating	Repeating verbal communication
Replacing	Replacing verbal communication
Self-adaptors	Adapting something about yourself in a way for which it was not designed or for no apparent purpose

Nonverbal Communication Is Universal

Consider the many contexts in which interaction occurs during your day. In the morning, at work, after work, at home, with friends, or with family. Now consider the differences in nonverbal communication across these many contexts. When you are at work, do you jump up and down and say whatever you want? Why or why not? You may not engage in that behaviour because of expectations at work, but the fact remains that from the moment you wake until you sleep, you are surrounded by nonverbal communication.

If you had been born in a different country, to different parents, and perhaps as a member of the opposite sex, your whole world would be quite different. Yet nonverbal communication would remain fairly consistent. It may not look exactly the same, or get used in exactly the same way, but it will still be nonverbal with all of its many functions and displays.

Nonverbal Communication Is Confusing and Contextual

Nonverbal communication can be confusing. You need contextual clues to help you understand, or begin to understand, what a movement, gesture (or lack of gestures) means. Then you have to figure it all out based on your prior knowledge (or lack thereof) of the person and hope to get it right. Talk about a challenge! Nonverbal communication is everywhere, and you and everyone else uses it, but that doesn't make it simple or independent of when, where, why, or how you communicate.

Nonverbal Communication Can Be Intentional or Unintentional

Suppose you are working as a salesclerk in a retail store, and a customer communicates frustration to you. Will the nonverbal aspects of your response be intentional or unintentional? Your job is to be pleasant and courteous at all times, yet your wrinkled eyebrows or wide eyes may have been unintentional. They clearly communicate your negative feelings at that moment. Restating your wish to be helpful and displaying nonverbal gestures may communicate "no big deal," but the stress of the moment is still "written" on your face.

Can you tell when people are intentionally or unintentionally communicating nonverbally? Ask ten people this question and compare their responses. You may be surprised. It is clearly a challenge to understand nonverbal communication in action. You may assign intentional motives to nonverbal communication when in fact their display is unintentional, and often hard to interpret.

Nonverbal Messages Communicate Feelings and Attitudes

Albert Mehrabian asserts that we rarely communicate emotional messages through the spoken word. According to Mehrabian, 93 percent of the time we communicate our emotions nonverbally, with at least 55 percent of these nonverbal cues associated with **facial gestures**. Vocal cues, body position and movement, and normative space between speaker and receiver can also be clues to feelings and attitudes (Mehrabian, 1972).

Is your first emotional response always an accurate and true representation of your feelings and attitudes, or does your emotional response change across time? You are changing all the time, and sometimes a moment of frustration or a flash of anger can signal to the receiver a feeling or emotion that existed for a moment, but has since passed. Their response to your communication will be based on that perception, even though you might already be over the issue.

Nonverbal Communication Is a Key Factor to Forming Relationships

When you first see another person, before either of you says a word, you are already reading nonverbal signals. Within the first few seconds you have made judgments about the other based on what they wear, their physical characteristics, even their posture. Are these judgments accurate? That is hard to know without context, but it is clear that nonverbal communication affects first impressions, for better or worse.

Nonverbal communication in terms of space, dress, and even personal characteristics can contribute to assumed expectations in any new relationship, but particularly so in business. Consider interviews, customer service, or a business pitch. The expectations might not be accurate or even fair, but it is important to recognize that they will be present. There is truth in the saying, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” Since first impressions are quick and fragile, your attention to aspects you can control, both verbal and nonverbal, will help contribute to the first step of forming relationships. When presenting, your eye contact with audience members, use of space, and degree of formality will continue to contribute to that relationship.

As a speaker, your nonverbal communication is part of the message and can contribute to, or detract from, your overall goals. By being aware of that physical communication, and practicing with a live audience, you can learn to be more aware and in control.

Read the following 4-page PDF on how to dress for success “First Impressions: A Study of Nonverbal Communication” (Latha, 2014)

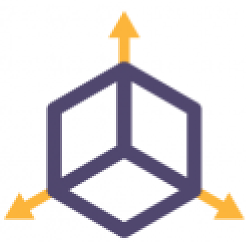
To summarize, nonverbal communication is the process of conveying a message without the use of words; it relates to the dynamic process of communication, the perception process and listening, and verbal communication.

Nonverbal communication is fluid and fast, universal, confusing, and contextual. It can add to or replace verbal communication and can be intentional or unintentional. Nonverbal communication communicates feelings and attitudes, and people tend to believe nonverbal messages more than verbal ones. When your nonverbal and verbal messages agree, people tend to trust you more.

4.5 Types of Nonverbal Communication

Now that you have learned about the general principles that apply to nonverbal communication, here are eight types of nonverbal communication to further understand this challenging aspect of communication:

1. Space
2. Time
3. Eye Contact
4. Body movements
5. Touch
6. Paralanguage
7. Personal Style



Space

When we discuss **space** in a nonverbal context we are referring to the space between people, **proxemics**, as well as the space between objects and people.

Space is often associated with social rank and is an important part of business communication. Who gets the corner office? Why is the head of the table important and who gets to sit there?

Territory is related to control. As a way of establishing control over your own room, maybe you painted it your favourite colour, or put up posters that represent your interests or things you consider unique about yourself. Families or households often mark their space by putting up fences or walls around their houses. This sense of a right to control your space is implicit in territory. Territory means the space you claim as your own, are responsible for, or are willing to defend.

People from diverse cultures may have different normative space expectations. If you are from a large urban area, having people stand close to you may be normal, however a stranger coming to sit beside you on an empty bus may make you feel very uncomfortable. If you are from a rural area or a culture where people expect more space, someone may be standing "too close" for comfort, and not know it. How much space should you leave between yourself and a person you are conversing with when you first meet them? How close can you stand to a colleague before one or both of you feels uncomfortable?

Among most humans there is a basic need for personal space, but the normative expectations for space vary greatly by culture. You may perceive that in your home people sleep one to each bed, but in many cultures, people sleep two or more to a bed and it is considered normal. If you were to share that bed, you might feel uncomfortable, while someone raised with group sleeping norms might feel uncomfortable sleeping alone. From where you stand in an aerobics class in relation to others, to where you place your book bag in class, your personal expectations of space are often at variance with others.

Watch the following 3 minute video from CBS with special correspondent Taryn Winter Brill about personal space:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=113#oembed-1

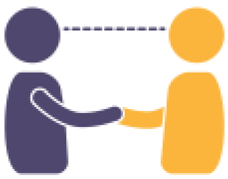
Video: Personal Space: [How Close is Too Close?](#) by [CBS](#) [2:55] Transcript available

Time

In chapter 3 we looked at **chronemics** in terms of cultural views of time, but chronemics considers the impact of time on communication as a whole, including non-verbal communication. Being late for an appointment may be considered rude by those in monochronic cultures, whereas those in polychronic cultures will have a much more fluid sense of time, and would expect you to be a half an hour late – in fact showing up earlier may present a problem because your host will not be ready. What message are you sending when you are late? Are you showing a lack of respect? Some people, and the communities and cultures they represent, are very time-oriented and expect strict punctuality; they may be offended and unwilling to wait if you are late. This sense of time can also be related to status. If your boss is 20 minutes late for a meeting the team will wait patiently, however the same patience will not be expected of your boss if you or a colleague are running late.

When thinking of time and nonverbal communication, we are not always referring to the time of day – it could be the time of year (you may offer your neighbour a quick wave when outside in the winter because it's too cold to stand outside and exchange pleasantries), it could also be a time of life (young children have a very different perception of time than adults, and cannot be expected to wait as patiently as an adult), or a time in history (certain gestures in the Middle Ages would not be understood or accepted in the same way they would be in the 21st century).

Time is a relevant factor of the communication process in your speech. How slowly or quickly do you speak? Which tempo expresses enthusiasm and excitement as compared to a lack of engagement? When you give a presentation, does your audience have to wait for you to start or remain seated when you go 15 minutes overtime? The best way to show your audience respect is to honour the time expectation associated with your speech. Always try to stop speaking before the audience stops listening; if the audience perceives that you have "gone over time," they will be less willing to listen. This in turn will have a negative impact on your ability to communicate your message.



Eye Contact

What is your impression of someone who won't look you in the eye? **Eye contact**, or **oculesics**, plays a significant role in nonverbal communication and can have a big impact on our perception of another person. Are they shy? Nervous? Do they just lack confidence? Or are they untrustworthy? An interviewee, customer, or friend who avoids your glance may do so for a variety of reasons.

If we think of the sayings, "eyes are the window to the soul", or, "if looks could kill", they remind us of the range of emotions one can express through their eyes.

Body Movements

The study of body movements, called **kinesics**, is key to understanding nonverbal communication.

Body movements in the form of facial expressions, hand gestures, and other forms of body language such as posture can complement the verbal message by reinforcing the main idea – or do the exact opposite. For example, as a server in a restaurant you ask patrons if they enjoyed their meal, and those at the table say, "Yes!", smile broadly, and give you the "thumbs up" sign, you would be confident they were happy with their food. The patrons' verbal and nonverbal messages reinforced each other. However, if the patrons frown slightly and offer a quiet "yah" with a slightly bowed head, you may determine that the meal did not meet their expectations. When a person's verbal and non-verbal messages agree we trust the accuracy of the message more.

Body movements can also regulate conversations. Nodding your head to indicate that you are listening may encourage them to continue a difficult conversation. Holding your hand up, palm out, may signal them to stop and provide a pause where you can start to answer; it may also invite an angry response as your partner feels you are shutting them down.

Body movements can substitute for or replace verbal messages. For example, if a customer makes a face of frustration while trying to "tap" their credit card, they may need assistance. If they push away from the counter and separate themselves physically from interacting with the system, they may be extremely frustrated. Learning to gauge feelings and their intensity as expressed nonverbally takes time and patience, and can vary from culture to culture, but your attention to them will improve your ability to communicate and facilitate positive interactions.

Touch

Haptics refers to communication by touch. What are you communicating when you touch someone on the arm? Are you showing care, affection, or trying to get them to listen to you? How will your touch be interpreted? Much depends on the individual's cultural background and the setting. In social or business settings, physical touch may be completely unacceptable, especially between members of the opposite sex or between someone in authority and their junior.

Consider a handshake and the message you are sending by extending your hand and how firmly you grasp the hand of another. If you are giving a business presentation, you may interact with people by shaking hands and making casual conversation. This interaction can help establish trust before you deliver your pitch.

Watch the following short video that demonstrates the importance of handshakes. Bad Business Handshakes:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=113#oembed-2

Video: The Top 10 Bad Business Handshakes by BusinessGovAu [3:00] Transcript available

Paralanguage

Paralanguage is also known as **vocalics**, and is the exception to the definition of nonverbal communication. You may recall that nonverbal communication was defined as "not involving words" but paralanguage is a unique form of nonverbal communication that exists when we are speaking, using words, or making sounds. Paralanguage involves tone, pitch and other nonverbal aspects of speech that influence meaning, including how loudly or softly you are speaking, intensity, pauses, and even silence. It can also refer to a sound such as a grunt, a sigh, or a snort of disbelief or disgust.

Perhaps you've heard of a pregnant pause, a silence between verbal messages that is full of meaning. The meaning itself may be hard to understand or decipher, but it is there nonetheless. For example, your coworker Jan comes back from a sales meeting speechless. You may ask if the meeting went all right. "Well, ahh…" may be the only response you get. The pause speaks volumes. Something happened, though you may not know what. Silence or vocal pauses can communicate hesitation, indicate the need to gather thought, or serve as a sign of respect. Sometimes we learn just as much, or even more, from what a person does *not* say, as from what they do say.

Watch the following 1 minute video. It's Not What You Say, It's How You Say It:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=113#oembed-3

Video: Paralanguage – It's Not WHAT You Say But HOW You Say It by Janet Harllee [1:18] Transcript available

Personal Style

Personal style covers a variety of things such as body decoration, hairstyles and clothing. **Artifacts** are forms of decorative ornamentation that are chosen to represent self-concept. They can include rings and tattoos, but may also include brand names and logos. From clothes to cars, watches, briefcases, purses, and even eyeglasses, what we choose to surround ourselves with communicates something about our sense of self. Artifacts may project gender, role or position, class or status, personality, and group membership or affiliation. Think of a uniform and what that may portray – a soldier, private school student, hockey player, nurse, lifeguard or a police officer – what are the nonverbal messages their attire sends? Paying attention to an individual's artifacts can give you a sense of the self they want to communicate, and may allow you to more accurately adapt your message to meet their needs or situation.

Do you cover your tattoos when you are at work? Do you know someone who does? Or perhaps you know someone who has a tattoo and does not need to cover it up on their job? Expectations vary a great deal, and body art or tattoos may still be controversial in the workplace. In your line of work, a tattoo might be an important visual aid, or it might detract from your effectiveness as a business communicator. Body piercings may express individuality, but you need to consider how they will be interpreted by employers and customers.

You didn't choose your genes, your eye colour, the natural colour of your hair, or your height, but people spend millions every year trying to change their physical characteristics. You can get coloured contacts, dye your hair, workout or have plastic surgery. If you are shorter than you'd like to be, you can buy shoes to raise your stature a couple of inches; no matter how much you stoop to appear shorter, however, you won't change your height until time and age gradually take their toll. If you are tall, you might find the correct shoe size, pant length, or even the length of mattress a challenge, but there may also be rewards when it comes to how people perceive you. Regardless of your eye or hair colour, or even how tall you are, being comfortable with yourself is an important part of your presentation. Act naturally and consider aspects of your presentation you can control in order to maximize a positive image for the audience.

In this 1 minute, 24 second video, Adoni Irani, from the University of Toronto, shares the story behind his tattoos:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=113#oembed-4

Video: Inked@UTSC: Adoni Irani explains his tattoos by University of Toronto Scarborough [1:24] Transcript available

In the same way that there are cultural contexts and expectations for nonverbal behaviour, public speaking also happens within different contexts. In North America, eye contact with the audience is expected. Big movements and gestures are not generally expected and can be distracting, however, they can also help you stand out and make a point. The speaker occupies a space on the "stage," even if it's in front of the class. When you occupy that space, the audience will expect you to behave in certain ways. If you talk to the screen behind you while displaying a PowerPoint presentation, the audience may perceive that you are not paying attention to them. Speakers are expected to pay attention to, and interact with, the audience, even if the feedback is primarily nonverbal or the presentation is made online. Your movements should coordinate with the tone, rhythm, and content of your speech. Pacing back and forth, keeping your hands in your pockets, or crossing your arms may communicate nervousness, or even defensiveness, and detract from your message.

To summarize, nonverbal communication can be categorized into seven types: space, time, eye contact, body movements, touch, paralanguage, and personal style.

4.6 Movement in Presentations

At some point in your business career you will be called upon to give a speech. It may be to an audience of one on a sales floor, or to a large audience at a national meeting. You already know you need to make a positive first impression, but do you know how to use movement in your presentation? In this section we'll examine several strategies for movement and their relative advantages and disadvantages.

Customers and audiences respond well to speakers who are comfortable with themselves. Comfortable doesn't mean overconfident or cocky, and it doesn't mean shy or timid. It means that an audience is far more likely to forgive the occasional "umm" or "ahh," or the nonverbal equivalent of a misstep, if the speaker is comfortable with themselves and their message.

Let's start with behaviours to avoid. Who would you rather listen to: a speaker who moves confidently across the stage or one who hides behind the podium; one who expresses herself nonverbally with purpose and meaning or one who crosses his arms or clings to the lectern?

Audiences are most likely to respond positively to open, dynamic speakers who convey the feeling of being at ease with their bodies. The setting, combined with audience expectations, will give a range of movement. If you are speaking at a formal event, or if you are being covered by a stationary camera, you may be expected to stay in one spot. If the stage allows you to explore, closing the distance between yourself and your audience may prove effective. Rather than focus on a list of behaviours and their relationship to environment and context, give emphasis to what your audience expects and what you yourself would find more engaging instead.

The questions are, again, what does your audience consider appropriate and what do you feel comfortable doing during your presentation? Since the emphasis is always on meeting the needs of the customer, whether it is an audience of one on a sales floor or a large national gathering, you may need to stretch outside your comfort zone. On that same note, don't stretch too far and move yourself into the uncomfortable range. Finding balance is a challenge, but no one ever said giving a speech was easy.

Movement is an important aspect of your speech and requires planning, the same as the words you choose and the visual aids you design. Be natural, but do not naturally shuffle your feet, pace back and forth, or rock on your heels through your entire speech. These behaviours distract your audience from your message and can communicate nervousness, undermining your credibility.

Gestures

Gestures involve using your arms and hands while communicating. Gestures provide a way to channel your nervous energy into a positive activity that benefits your speech and gives you something to do with your hands. For example, watch people in normal, everyday conversations. They frequently use their hands to express themselves. Do you think they think about how they use their hands? Most people do not. Their arm and hand gestures come naturally as part of their expression, often reflecting what they have learned within their community.

For professional speakers this is also true, but deliberate movement can reinforce, repeat, and even regulate an audience's response to their verbal and nonverbal messages. You want to come across as comfortable and natural, and your use of your arms and hands contributes to your presentation. We can easily recognize that a well-chosen gesture can help make a point memorable or lead the audience to the next point.

As professional speakers lead up to a main point, they raise their hand slightly, perhaps waist high, often called an anticipation step. The gesture clearly shows the audience your anticipation of an upcoming point, serving as a nonverbal form of foreshadowing.

The implementation step, which comes next, involves using your arms and hands above your waist. By holding one hand at waist level pointing outward, and raising it up with your palm forward, as in the "stop" gesture, you signal the point. The nonverbal gesture complements the spoken word, and as students of speech have noted across time, audiences respond to this nonverbal reinforcement. You then slowly lower your hand down past your waistline and away from your body, letting go of the gesture, and signalling your transition.

The relaxation step, where the letting go motion complements your residual message, concludes the motion.

Watch the following 3 minute video featuring Toastmasters International world champion of public speaking Dananjaya Hettiarachchi. Using Hand Gestures in Presentations:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=115#oembed-1

Video: [4 essential body language tips from a world champion public speaker](#) by [Insider Business](#) [2:27]
Transcript Available

Facial Gestures

As you progress as a speaker from gestures and movement, you will need to turn your attention to facial gestures and expressions. Facial gestures involve using your face to display feelings and attitudes nonverbally. They may reinforce, or contradict, the spoken word, and their impact cannot be underestimated. As in other body movements, your facial gestures should come naturally, but giving them due thought and consideration can keep you aware of how you are communicating the nonverbal message.

Facial gestures should reflect the tone and emotion of your verbal communication. If you are using humour in your speech, you will likely smile to complement the amusement expressed in your words. Smiling will be much less appropriate if your presentation involves a serious subject such as cancer or car accidents. Consider how you want your audience to feel in response to your message, and identify the facial gestures you can use to promote those feelings. Then practice in front of a mirror so that the gestures come naturally.

Eye contact refers to the speaker's gaze that engages the audience members. It can vary in degree and length, and in many cases, is culturally influenced. Both in the speaker's expectations and the audience member's notion of what is appropriate will influence normative expectations for eye contact. In some cultures, there are understood behavioural expectations for male gaze directed toward females, and vice versa. In a similar way, children may have expectations of when to look their elders in the eye, and when to gaze down. Depending on the culture, both may be nonverbal signals of listening. Understanding your audience is critical when it comes to nonverbal expectations.

When giving a presentation, avoid looking over people's heads, staring at a point on the wall, or letting your eyes dart all over the place. The audience will find these mannerisms unnerving. They will not feel as connected, or receptive, to your message and you will reduce your effectiveness. Move your eyes gradually and naturally across the audience, both close to you and toward the back of the room. Try to look for faces that look interested and engaged in your message. Do not focus on only one or two audience members, as audiences may respond negatively to perceived favouritism. Instead, try to give as much eye contact as possible across the audience. Keep it natural, but give it deliberate thought.

Watch the following 1 minute video on the triangle method of eye contact:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=115#oembed-2

Video: The Triangle Method by Jill Shiefelbein [1:21] Transcript available

In summary, use movement strategically in your presentation, keep it natural and consider using facial gestures, and natural eye contact.

4.7 Conclusion

Reflection Activity

Returning to Abe's desire to learn more about an informal conversation with colleagues in a Canadian context, what have you learned about language and communication that might help you be good support for Abe's learning?

After reading this chapter, and returning to Dhavit's challenge related to nonverbal communication, how might Dhavit adapt his body language and facial expressions to ensure that workshop participants believe he is open to hearing their questions and concerns?

Quick Quiz

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Questions

1. Watch a television program without the sound. Can you understand the program? Write a description of the program and include what you found easy to understand, and what presented a challenge, and present it to the class.
2. Interview someone from a different culture than your own (explaining your purpose clearly) and ask them to share a specific cultural difference in nonverbal communication—for example, a nonverbal gesture that is not used in polite company.

Glossary

Adaptors – displays of nonverbal communication that help you adapt to your environment and each context, helping you feel comfortable and secure.

Affect displays– nonverbal communication that express emotions or feelings, for example smiling and waiving to coworkers to welcome them to an event.

Artifacts – forms of decorative ornamentation that are chosen to represent self-concept.

Chronemics – cultural views of time.

Cliché – a common saying that may make no sense to other cultures.

Connotative – The connotative meaning is often not found in the dictionary but in the community of users itself.

Context – Contextual rules govern meaning and word choice according to context and social custom.

Denotative – The denotative meaning is the common meaning, often found in the dictionary.

Doublespeak – Doublespeak is the deliberate use of words to disguise, obscure, or change meaning.

Emblems – gestures that have a specific agreed-on meaning, like when someone raises their thumb to indicate agreement.

Euphemism – A euphemism involves substituting an acceptable word for an offensive, controversial, or unacceptable one that conveys the same or similar meaning.

Eye contact – refers to the speaker's gaze that engages the audience members. It can vary in degree and length, and in many cases, is culturally influenced.

Facial gestures – involve using your face to display feelings and attitudes nonverbally.

Gestures – involve using your arms and hands while communicating.

Haptics – communication by touch.

Illustrator – a nonverbal gesture, such as a hand motion to emphasize or illustrate a point you're making.

Jargon – Jargon is an occupation-specific language used by people in a given profession.

Kinesics – the study of body movements.

Language – A system of symbols, words, and/or gestures used to communicate meaning.

Offensive Language – Some language is offensive and has no place in the workplace.

Nonverbal communication – the process of conveying a message without the use of words. It can include gestures and facial expressions, tone of voice, timing, posture and where you stand as you communicate.

Object-adaptor – involves the use of an object in a way for which it was not designed.

Oculesics – eye contact.

Paralanguage – involves tone and nonverbal aspects of speech that influence meaning, including how loudly or softly you are speaking, intensity, pausing, and even silence.

Proxemics – the space between people and the space between people and objects.

Space – in a nonverbal context, this means the space between objects and people.

Semantics – Semantic rules govern the meaning of words and how to interpret them (Martinich, 1996)

Slang – The use of existing or newly invented words to take the place of standard or traditional words with the intent of adding an unconventional, nonstandard, humorous, or rebellious effect.

Symbol – Something that suggests or represents something else.

Syntax – Syntactic rules govern the order of words in a sentence.

Triangle of Meaning – A model of communication that indicates the relationship among a thought, symbol, and referent and highlights the indirect relationship between the symbol and referent.

Vocalics – another term for paralanguage.

Word – a single distinct meaningful element in speech or writing

Additional Resources

Toastmasters International – [Public speaking tips]

Harvard psychology professor Steven Pinker is one of today's most innovative authorities on language. Explore reviews of books about language Pinker has published. [Steven Pinker Research]

The "I Have a Dream" speech by Martin Luther King Jr. is one of the most famous speeches of all time. View it on video and read the text. "I Have a Dream" Martin Luther King Jr.

Visit Goodreads and learn about one of the most widely used style manuals, The Chicago Manual of Style.

Visit this site for a library of University of California videotapes on nonverbal communication produced by Dane Archer of the University of California at Santa Cruz. Exploring Nonverbal Communication

Read "Six Ways to Improve Your Nonverbal Communications" by Vicki Ritts, St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley and James R. Stein, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville. Six Ways to Improve Your Nonverbal Communications

Is "how you say it" really more important than what you say? Read an article by communications expert Dana Bristol-Smith that debunks a popular myth. How You Say It Is NOT More Important Than What You Say

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CHAPTER 5: CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND ETHICS

Chapter Preview

Chapter 5 has been adapted from:

5.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, learners will be able to:

- Outline the philosophies and concepts that shape personal ethical standards.
- Discuss ways that organizations can encourage ethical business behavior.
- Define corporate social responsibility.
- Describe how businesses meet their social responsibilities.
- Discuss the trends in ethics and corporate social responsibility.

Professional Perspective

Abe is working late one evening when her coworker, Martin, asks if she will help him find more paper for a large photocopy job. Martin says that he is photocopying for his wife's small contracting business. He needs 3,000 colour copies of his wife's promotional booklets to hand out at the Homeshow on the weekend, and the quote from the copy store was so high that Martin decided to make the copies at work "for free". What should Abe do?

5.1 Understanding Business Ethics

What philosophies and concepts shape personal ethical standards?

Ethics is a set of moral standards for judging whether something is right or wrong. The first step in understanding business ethics is learning to recognize an **ethical issue**. An ethical issue is a situation where someone must choose between a set of actions that may be ethical or unethical. **Business ethics** are how we ought to conduct business fairly using real-world situations.

Example

Martin Shkreli, former CEO of Turing Pharmaceuticals, raised the price of a drug used for newborns and HIV patients by more than 5000 percent, defending the price increase as a "great business decision." (Merle, 2017, para. 3) Few people would call that ethical behaviour.
But consider the actions of the stranded, hungry people in New Orleans who lost everything in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. They broke into flooded stores, taking food and bottled water without paying for them. Was this unethical behaviour? Or what about the small Texas plastics manufacturer that employed over 100 people and specialized in the Latin American market? The president was distraught because he knew the firm would be bankrupt by the end of the year if it didn't receive more contracts. He knew that he was losing business because he refused to pay bribes. Bribes were part of the culture in his major markets. Closing the firm would put many people out of work. Should he start paying bribes in order to stay in business? Would this be unethical? Let's look at the next section to obtain some guidance on recognizing unethical situations.

Recognizing Unethical Business Activities

Researchers from Brigham Young University tell us that all unethical business activities will fall into one of the following categories:

1. *Taking things that don't belong to you.* The unauthorized use of someone else's property or taking property under false pretenses is taking something that does not belong to you. Even the smallest offence, such as using the postage meter at your office for mailing personal letters or exaggerating your travel expenses, belongs in this category of ethical violations.
2. *Saying things you know are not true.* Often, when trying for a promotion and advancement, fellow employees discredit their coworkers. Falsely assigning blame or inaccurately reporting conversations is lying. Although "This is the way the game is played around here" is a common justification, saying things that are untrue is an ethical

violation.

3. *Giving or allowing false impressions.* The salesperson who permits a potential customer to believe that cardboard boxes will hold the customer's tomatoes for long-distance shipping when the salesperson knows the boxes are not strong enough has given a false impression. A car dealer who fails to disclose that a car has been in an accident is misleading potential customers.
4. *Buying influence or engaging in a conflict of interest.* A conflict of interest occurs when the official responsibilities of an employee or government official are influenced by the potential for personal gain. Suppose an American company awards a construction contract to a firm owned by the father of the state attorney general while the state attorney general's office is investigating that company. If this construction award has the potential to shape the outcome of the investigation, a conflict of interest has occurred.
5. *Hiding or divulging information.* Failing to disclose the results of medical studies that indicate your firm's new drug has significant side effects is the ethical violation of hiding information that the product could be harmful to purchasers. Taking your firm's product development or trade secrets to a new place of employment constitutes the ethical violation of divulging proprietary information.
6. *Taking unfair advantage.* Many current consumer protection laws in Canada and the United States were passed because so many businesses took unfair advantage of people who were not educated or were unable to discern the nuances of complex contracts. Cooling off periods, laws around credit and borrowing, and new regulations on door-to-door sales all resulted because businesses misled consumers who could not easily follow the jargon of long, complex agreements. See [Your Rights Under *Consumer Protection Act* – Misrepresentation] for details on consumer rights in Ontario.
7. *Committing improper personal behaviour.* Although the ethical aspects of an employee's right to privacy are still debated, it has become increasingly clear that personal conduct outside the job can influence performance and company reputation. Thus, a company driver must abstain from substance abuse because of safety issues. Even the traditional company holiday party and summer picnic have come under scrutiny due to the possibility that employees at and following these events might harm others through alcohol-related accidents.
8. *Abusing power and mistreating individuals.* Suppose a manager sexually harasses an employee or subjects employees to humiliating corrections or reprimands in the presence of customers. In some cases, sexual harassment in particular, laws protect employees. Many situations, however, are simply interpersonal abuse that constitutes an ethical violation.
9. *Permitting organizational abuse.* Many U.S. and Canadian firms with operations overseas have faced issues of organizational abuse. The unfair treatment of workers in international operations appears in the form of child labour, demeaning wages, excessive work hours, and unsafe work environments. Although a business cannot change the culture of another country, it can perpetuate—or stop—abuse through its operations there.
10. *Violating rules.* Many organizations use rules and processes to maintain internal controls or respect the authority of managers. Although these rules may seem burdensome to employees trying to serve customers, a violation may be considered an unethical act.
11. *Condoning unethical actions.* What if you witnessed a fellow employee embezzling company funds by forging her signature on a check? Would you report the violation? A winking tolerance of others' unethical behaviour is itself unethical. (Schwartz, 2015)

After recognizing that a situation is unethical, the next question is what do you do? The action that a person takes is partially based upon his or her ethical philosophy. The environment in which we live and work also plays a role in our behaviour. This section describes personal philosophies and legal factors that influence the choices we make when confronting an ethical dilemma.

Justice—The Question of Fairness

Another factor influencing individual business ethics is **justice**, or what is fair according to prevailing standards of society. We all expect life to be reasonably fair. You expect your exams to be fair, the grading to be fair, and your wages to be fair, based on the type of work being done.

Today we take justice to mean an equitable distribution of the burdens and rewards that society has to offer. The distributive process varies from society to society. Those in a democratic society believe in the "equal pay for equal work" doctrine, in which individuals are rewarded based on the value the free market places on their services. Because the market places different values on different occupations, the rewards, such as wages, are not necessarily equal. Nevertheless, many regard the rewards as just. A politician who argued that a supermarket clerk should receive the same pay as a physician, for example, would not receive many votes in an election. At the other extreme, communist theorists have argued that justice would be served by a society in which burdens and rewards were distributed to individuals according to their abilities and their needs, respectively.

Utilitarianism—Seeking the Best for the Majority

One of the philosophies that may influence choices between right and wrong is **utilitarianism**, which focuses on the consequences of an action taken by a person or organization. The notion that people should act so as to generate the greatest good for the greatest number is derived from utilitarianism. When an action affects the majority adversely, it is morally wrong. One problem with this philosophy is that it is nearly impossible to accurately determine how a decision will affect a large number of people.

Another problem is that utilitarianism always involves both winners and losers. If sales are slowing and a manager decides to fire five people rather than putting everyone on a 30-hour workweek, the 20 people who keep their full-time jobs are winners, but the other five are losers.

A final criticism of utilitarianism is that some "costs," although small relative to the potential good, are so negative that some segments of society find them unacceptable. What if scientists deliberately killed animals by breaking their backs to conduct spinal cord research that someday could lead to a cure for spinal cord injuries? To a number of people, the "costs" of killing these animals are simply too horrible for this type of research to continue.

Following Our Obligations and Duties

The philosophy that says people should meet their obligations and duties when analyzing an ethical dilemma is called **deontology**. This means that a person will follow his or her obligations to another individual or society because upholding one's duty is what is considered ethically correct. For instance, people who follow this philosophy will always keep their promises to a friend and will follow the law. They will produce very consistent decisions, because they will be based on the individual's set duties. Note that this theory is not necessarily concerned with the welfare of others. Say, for example, a technician for Orkin Pest Control has decided that it's his ethical duty (and is very practical) to always be on time to meetings with homeowners. Today he is running late. How is he supposed to drive? Is the technician supposed to speed, breaking his duty to society to uphold the law, or is he supposed to arrive at the client's home late, breaking his duty to be on time? This scenario of conflicting obligations does not lead us to a clear ethically correct resolution, nor does it protect the welfare of others from the technician's decision.

Individual Rights

In our society, individuals and groups have certain rights that exist under certain conditions regardless of any external circumstances. These rights serve as guides when making individual ethical decisions. The term **human rights** implies that certain rights—to life, to freedom, to the pursuit of happiness—are bestowed at birth and cannot be arbitrarily taken away. Denying the rights of an individual or group is considered to be unethical and illegal in most, though not all, parts of the world. Certain rights are guaranteed by the government and its laws, and these are considered legal rights. Legal rights are to be applied without regard to race, colour, creed, gender, or ability.

5.2 How Organizations Influence Ethical Conduct

How can organizations encourage ethical business behaviour?

People choose between right and wrong based on their personal code of ethics. They are also influenced by the ethical environment created by their employers. Consider the following headlines:

- Investment advisor Bernard Madoff sentenced to 150 years in prison for swindling clients out of more than $65 billion.
- Former United Airlines CEO Jeff Smisek leaves the company after a federal investigation into whether United tried to influence officials at the Port Authority of New York.
- Renaud Laplanche, the founder of Lending Club, loses his job because of faulty practices and conflicts of interest at the online peer-to-peer lender.
- Wells Fargo CEO John Stumpf fired after company employees opened more than 2 million fake accounts to meet aggressive sales targets. (*TIME*, n.d.; McGregor, 2017; Hartung, 2017)

As these actual stories illustrate, poor business ethics can create a very negative image for a company, can be expensive for the firm and/or the executives involved, and can result in bankruptcy and jail time for the offenders. Organizations can reduce the potential for these types of liability claims by educating their employees about ethical standards, by leading through example, and through various informal and formal programs.

Leading by Example

Employees often follow the examples set by their managers. That is, leaders and managers establish patterns of behaviour that determine what's acceptable and what's not within the organization. While Ben Cohen was president of Ben & Jerry's ice cream, he followed a policy that no one could earn a salary more than seven times that of the lowest-paid worker. He wanted all employees to feel that they were equal. At the time he resigned, company sales were $140 million, and the lowest-paid worker earned $19,000 per year. Ben Cohen's salary was $133,000, based on the "seven times" rule. A typical top executive of a $140 million company might have earned 10 times Cohen's salary. Ben Cohen's actions helped shape the ethical values of Ben & Jerry's.

Offering Ethics Training Programs

In addition to providing a system to resolve ethical dilemmas, organizations also provide formal training to develop an awareness of questionable business activities and practice appropriate responses. Many companies have some type of ethics training program. The ones that are most effective, like those created by Levi Strauss, American Express, and Campbell Soup Company, begin with techniques for solving ethical dilemmas such as those discussed earlier. Next, employees are presented with a series of situations and asked to come up with the "best" ethical solution. One of these ethical dilemmas is shown below. According to a recent survey by the Ethics Resource Center, more than 80 percent of

U.S. companies provide some sort of ethics training for employees, which may include online activities, videos, and even games (Meinert, 2017; Kauflin, 2017).

An Ethical Dilemma Used for Employee Training

Bill Gannon was a middle manager of a large manufacturer of lighting fixtures in Newark, New Jersey. Bill had moved up the company ladder rather quickly and seemed destined for upper management in a few years. Bill's boss, Dana Johnson, had been pressuring them about the semiannual reviews concerning Robert Talbot, one of Bill's employees. Dana, it seemed, would not accept any negative comments on Robert's evaluation forms. Bill had found out that a previous manager who had given Robert a bad evaluation was no longer with the company. As Bill reviewed Robert's performance for the forthcoming evaluation period, they found many areas of subpar performance. Moreover, a major client had called recently complaining that Robert had filled a large order improperly and then had been rude to the client when she called to complain.

Discussion Questions

1. What ethical issues does the situation raise?
2. What courses of action could Bill take? Describe the ethics of each course.
3. Should Bill confront Dana? Dana's boss?
4. What would you do in this situation? What are the ethical implications?

Establishing a Formal Code of Ethics

Most large companies and thousands of smaller ones have created, printed, and distributed **codes of ethics**. In general, a code of ethics provides employees with the knowledge of what their firm expects in terms of their responsibilities and behaviour toward fellow employees, customers, and suppliers. Some ethical codes offer a lengthy and detailed set of guidelines for employees. Others are not really codes at all but rather summary statements of goals, policies, and priorities. Some companies have their codes framed and hung on office walls, included as a key component of employee handbooks, and/or posted on their corporate websites.

Examples of company codes of ethics:

- Costco
- Starbucks
- AT&T

Do codes of ethics make employees behave in a more ethical manner? Some people believe that they do. Others think that they are little more than public relations gimmicks. If senior management abides by the code of ethics and regularly emphasizes the code to employees, then it will likely have a positive influence on behaviour.

Table 5.1 below shows the 10 best Canadian corporate citizens in 2022 according to *Corporate Knights*.

Table 5.1. Top 10 Corporate Citizens, Canada, 2022, based on revenues of over $1B (USD) for almost 7,000 public companies (Data Source: Corporate Knights)

Rank	Name	Overall Score	Industry
1	Hydro-Quebec	85.6%	Power Generation
2	Innergex Renewable Energy Inc	84.6%	Power generation
3	Brookfield Renewable Partners LP	82.5%	Power Generation
4	BCE Inc	70.2%	Telecom providers
5	Kruger Products LP	69.1%	Forest Products
6	WSP Global Inc	68.8%	Engineering construction
7	Telus Corp	68.7%	Telecom providers
8	Cascades Inc	68.4%	Packaging
9	Toronto Hydro Corporation	67.1%	Power transmission and distribution
10	Societé de Transport de Montreal	66.8%	Transit and ground transportation

Customer Satisfaction and Quality

Campbell's Adds CSR to Its Recipe

The Campbell Soup Company is no longer just about traditional cans of processed soup. Under the guidance of its management team, particularly its former CEO Denise Morrison (Morrison retired from Campbell's in July of 2018), Campbell's has undergone a transformation that includes a strong emphasis on organics and fresh food—and a large serving of corporate citizenship.

Named one of the Best Corporate Citizens by Corporate Responsibility magazine in 2017, Campbell's is working to make sustainability and transparency part of its business DNA, and this culture shift has had an important influence on the company's business strategies.

Morrison, who took over as CEO in 2011, is a firm believer in the company's central vision: real food that matters for life's moments. "We can make a profit and make a difference, and we are doing both through our business . . . in a way that's authentic, that's transparent, and that truly matters," she explains.

Under Morrison's watch, the company recently acquired several fresh food and organic companies, including Bolthouse Farms, one of the largest suppliers of fresh carrots in the United States, and Garden Fresh Gourmet, which produces a top line of fresh salsa and hummus. Tracking the strong change in consumer preference for healthier food, Campbell's also recently acquired Plum Organics, a line of organic baby food products, which should help solidify the company's reputation for fresh ingredients with millennials and their families.

The company's transformation from a processed food giant to a major competitor in the fresh food business has also had a positive influence on the company's bottom line. Campbell's shareholders have to be pleased with the 20 percent increase in the company's stock price over the past two years, as the markets, competitors, and consumers take notice of the company's strong commitment to sustainability.

Inherent in the company's reinvention is the strong emphasis on corporate citizenship—doing good and giving back seem to be top priorities for Campbell's. In addition to acquiring sustainable and fresh food companies, Campbell's has also made a conscious decision to support the communities where their employees live and work. For example, the company launched a healthy communities initiative in Camden, New Jersey, where Campbell's is headquartered—an urban city that has seen its share of economic and social challenges in the past. In partnership with several local organizations, this initiative has helped fund community gardens, food pantries, nutrition education, and cooking classes that help build healthy communities. The Camden experience has been so successful that the company has expanded the program to other cities where it operates, including Detroit, Michigan, and Norwalk, Connecticut.

The company's ongoing commitment to fresh food, community involvement, and corporate social responsibility has helped change the narrative when it comes to being a sustainable and ethical organization.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does Campbell Soup Company's recent business acquisitions help support its CSR strategies?
2. Provide examples of how the company's transformation from a processed food giant to a purveyor of fresh ingredients can help attract a new group of customers.

(Fortune Magazine, 2017; Hurst, 2017; Seiffert, 2017; Stangis, 2016; Stevenson, 2016)

Making the Right Decision

In many situations, there may be no simple right or wrong answers. Yet there are several questions you can ask yourself, and a couple of self-tests you can do, to help you make the right ethical decision. First, ask yourself, "Are there any legal restrictions or violations that will result from the action?" If so, take a different course of action. If not, ask yourself, "Does it violate my company's code of ethics?" If so, again find a different path to follow. Third, ask, "Does this meet the guidelines of my own ethical philosophy?" If the answer is "yes," then your decision must still pass two important tests.

The Feelings Test

You must now ask, “How does it make me feel?” This enables you to examine your comfort level with a particular decision. Many people find that, after reaching a decision on an issue, they still experience discomfort that may manifest itself in a loss of sleep or appetite. Those feelings of conscience can serve as a future guide in resolving ethical dilemmas.

The Newspaper or Social Media Test

The final test involves the front page of the newspaper or social media posts. The question to be asked is how an objective reporter would describe your decision in a front-page newspaper story, an online media site, or a social media platform such as Twitter or Facebook. Some managers rephrase the test for their employees: How will the headline read if I make this decision, or what will be the reaction of my social media followers? This test is helpful in spotting and resolving potential conflicts of interest.

5.3 Managing a Socially Responsible Business

What is corporate social responsibility?

Acting in an ethical manner is one of the four components of the pyramid of **corporate social responsibility (CSR),** which is the concern of businesses for the welfare of society as a whole. It consists of obligations beyond those required by law or union contract. This definition makes two important points. First, CSR is voluntary. Beneficial action required by law, such as cleaning up factories that are polluting air and water, is not voluntary. Second, the obligations of corporate social responsibility are broad. They extend beyond investors in the company to include workers, suppliers, consumers, communities, and society at large.

Figure 5.1 portrays economic responsibility as the foundation for the other three responsibilities. At the same time that a business pursues profits (economic responsibility), however, it is expected to obey the law (legal responsibility); to do what is right, just, and fair (ethical responsibility); and to be a good corporate citizen (philanthropic responsibility). These four components are distinct but together constitute the whole. Still, if the company doesn't make a profit, then the other three responsibilities won't matter.

Many companies continue to work hard to make the world a better place to live. Recent data suggests that Fortune 500 companies spend more than $15 billion annually on CSR activities. Consider the following examples:

- Starbucks has donated more than one million meals to local communities via its FoodShare program and alliance with Feeding America, giving 100 percent of leftover food from their seven thousand U.S. company-owned stores.
- Salesforce encourages its employees to volunteer in community activities and pays them for doing so, up to 56 paid hours every year. For employees who participate in seven days of volunteerism in one year, Salesforce also gives them a $1,000 grant to donate to the employee's nonprofit of choice.
- Employees who work for Deloitte, a global audit, consulting, and financial services organization, can get paid for up to 48 hours of volunteer work each year. In a recent year, more than 27,000 Deloitte professionals contributed more than 353,000 volunteer hours to their communities around the world. ("Starbucks", 2017; "Celebrating Volunteerism", 2017; O'Keefe, 2016; Kokalitcheva, 2016)

Understanding Social Responsibility

Peter Drucker, the late globally respected management expert, said that we should look first at what an organization does *to* society and second at what it can do *for* society. This idea suggests that social responsibility has two basic dimensions: legality and responsibility.

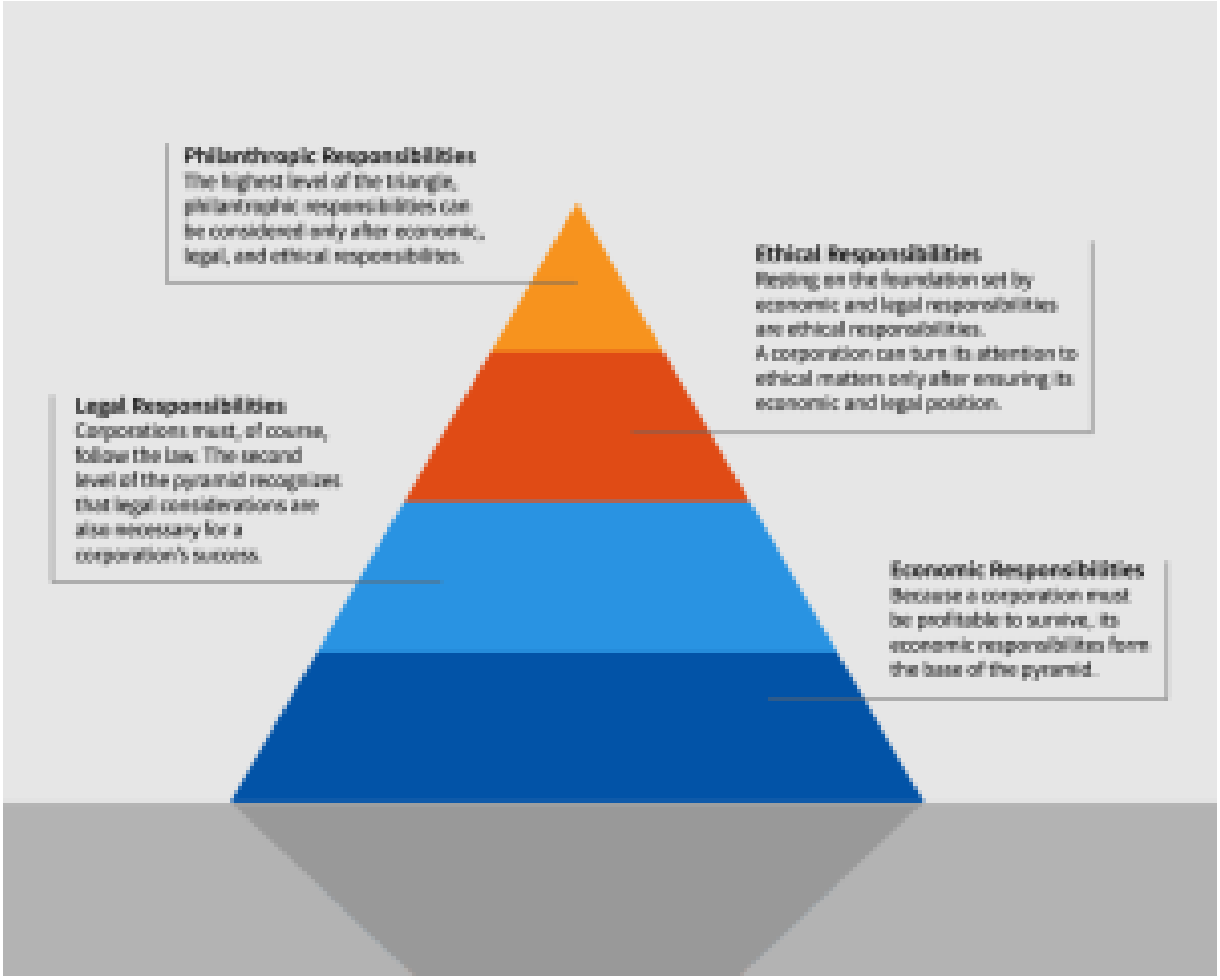


Figure 5.1 "Corporate Responsibility" by Fanshawe College, [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) (Adapted from "The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility" by [Rice University, OpenStax](#), [CC BY-4.0](#))

Illegal and Irresponsible Behaviour

The idea of corporate social responsibility is so widespread today that it is hard to conceive of a company continually acting in illegal and irresponsible ways. Nevertheless, such actions do sometimes occur, which can create financial ruin for organizations, extreme financial hardships for many former employees, and general struggles for the communities in which they operate. Unfortunately, top executives still walk away with millions. Some, however, will ultimately pay large fines and spend time in prison for their actions. Federal, provincial/state, and local laws determine whether an activity is legal or not. The laws that regulate business are discussed later in this module.

Irresponsible but Legal Behaviour

Sometimes companies act irresponsibly, yet their actions are legal. For example, the Minnesota-based company that makes MyPillow was recently fined $1 million by the state of California for making unsubstantiated claims that the "most comfortable pillow you'll ever own" could help alleviate medical conditions such as snoring, fibromyalgia, migraines, and other disorders. The company's CEO countered that the claims were actually made by customers; these testimonials were posted on the company's website but later removed. In addition to the fine, the company faced several class-action lawsuits, and the Better Business Bureau has revoked MyPillow's accreditation (Ewoldt, 2017; Weisbaum, 2016).

Catching the Entrepreneurial Spirit

Badger Company Founder Walks the Walk

As a carpenter, Bill Whyte was always looking for a solution to his dry, cracked hands, especially in the harsh New Hampshire winters. After trying many commercial lotions that didn't really work, Whyte experimented with olive oil and beeswax to come up with a soothing balm to help heal rough hands. Mixing up the concoction at home, Whyte came up with a product that seemed to work and was made from natural ingredients.

Originally called Bear Paw, the lotion became known as Badger Balm after a friend found a competing product already named Bear Paw. Whyte set up a production line at home to fill the tins. Soon he was pounding the pavement in the town of Gilsum, trying to sell the new product to hardware stores, lumber yards, and health food stores.

Fast-forward a little more than 20 years from his early days of experimentation, and Whyte (affectionately known as the "head badger") runs W.S. Badger Company with the same goals and passions he started with back in the mid-1990s. The company uses only organic plant extracts, exotic oils, beeswax, and minerals to make the most effective products to soothe, heal, and protect the body. And the natural ingredients come from all over the world—for example, organic extra virgin olive oil from Spain, organic rose essential oil from Bulgaria, and bergamot oil from southern Italy.

Badger's homey culture is no accident. In fact, in the early days, Whyte made soup every Friday for the small staff. Today, Whyte and family members, including his wife Kathy, chief operating officer; daughter Rebecca, head of sustainability and innovation; and daughter Emily, head of sales and marketing, all embrace the ethical and social principles of this family business that have made the company a success.

To reinforce the commitment of being socially responsible and demonstrating transparency, W.S. Badger Company became a Certified Benefit Corporation, or B Corp for short. This certification requires companies to meet rigorous standards for transparency, accountability, and social and environmental performance. (Benefit Corporations are discussed in more detail later in this module.)

Becoming a B Corp. has helped the company organize how it operates. For example, pay for the highest-paid full-time employee is capped at five times that of the lowest paid, which is now $15 an hour (more than double New Hampshire's minimum wage); a portion of company profits flows to employees via profit sharing, and all employees participate in a bonus plan; and new parents are encouraged to bring their babies to work, a program that has helped foster a new style of teamwork for the entire organization, as well as increase employee morale. In addition, Badger donates 10 percent of its pre-tax profits annually to nonprofit organizations that focus on the health and welfare of children, matches employee contributions to charitable causes (up to $100 per employee), and donates an additional $50 to a nonprofit chosen by each employee on their birthday.

Badger staff, which now number more than 100, enjoy a living wage, great benefits, and a socially responsible work environment thanks to a visionary who found an eco-friendly way to soothe his rough hands and created an ethical business as part of his journey.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does Badger's approach to social responsibility help attract and retain employees?
2. Does the company's certification as a Benefit Corporation provide Badger with a competitive advantage? Explain your reasoning.

(B-Corp, 2023; Badger, n.d.-a; Badger, n.d.-b; Feldman, 2017; Fitzgerald, 2017)

Legal and Responsible Behaviour

The vast majority of business activities fall into the category of behaviour that is both legal and responsible. Most companies act legally, and most try to be socially responsible. Research shows that consumers, especially those under 30, are likely to buy brands that have excellent ethical track records and community involvement. Outdoor specialty retailer REI, for example, recently announced that it gave back nearly 70 percent of its profits to the outdoor community. A member cooperative, the company invested a record $9.3 million in its nonprofit partners in 2016 ("REI Co-op Gives Back", 2017).

5.4 Responsibilities to Stakeholders

How do businesses meet their social responsibilities to various stakeholders?

What makes a company be admired or perceived as socially responsible? Such a company meets its obligations to its stakeholders. Stakeholders are the individuals or groups to whom a business has a responsibility. The stakeholders of a business are its employees, its customers, the general public, and its investors.

Responsibility to Employees

An organization's first responsibility is to provide a job to employees. Keeping people employed and letting them have time to enjoy the fruits of their labour is the finest thing business can do for society. Beyond this fundamental responsibility, employers must provide a clean, safe working environment that is free from all forms of discrimination. Companies should also strive to provide job security whenever possible.

Enlightened firms are also empowering employees to make decisions on their own and suggest solutions to company problems. Empowerment contributes to an employee's self-worth, which, in turn, increases productivity and reduces absenteeism.

The Globe and Mail has compiled a list of Canada's best employers for 2023 in organizations of over 1,000 people. Topping the list is Cisco, an Information Technology/Software company. Interestingly, six of the top ten were all in the IT category (in order these include Salesforce, Intuit, NVIDIA, SAP and CGI). Admiral Insurance was ranked second, followed by two professional services/consulting companies, Slalom (#6) and Deloitte (#9). Ranked in the number ten spot was DHL, a transportation company. What makes these companies so great to work for? Cisco, for example has a Caregiving Concierge that assists employees and their families with emotional, financial, legal, housing and in-home support. Admiral Insurance offers employees two-year interest free Life Event loans of up to $3,000 for significant incidents like assisting family members who are ill, moving, escaping domestic violence or happy events such as a wedding. Other organizations offer benefits such as recharge days, opportunities to do volunteer work on company time, exceptional mental health benefits, flexible work arrangements, etc. (Canada's Best Workplaces Report, 2023)

Responsibility to Customers

To be successful in today's business environment, a company must satisfy its customers. A firm must deliver what it promises, as well as be honest and forthright in everyday interactions with customers, suppliers, and others. Recent research suggests that many consumers, particularly millennials, prefer to do business with companies and brands that communicate socially responsible messages, utilize sustainable manufacturing processes, and practice ethical business standards (Landrum, 2017).

Responsibility to Society

A business must also be responsible to society. A business provides a community with jobs, goods, and services. It also pays taxes that go to support schools, hospitals, and better roads. Some companies have taken an additional step to demonstrate their commitment to stakeholders and society as a whole by becoming Certified Benefit Corporations, or B Corps for short. Verified by B Lab, a global nonprofit organization, B Corps meet the highest standards of social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability and strive to use the power of business to solve social and environmental problems via an impact assessment that rates each company on a possible score of 200 points. To become certified as a Benefit Corporation, companies need to reach a score of at least 80 and must be recertified every two years. There are more than 2,000 companies worldwide that have been certified as B Corps, including Method, W.S. Badger Company, Fishpeople Seafood, LEAP Organics, New Belgium Brewing Company, Ben & Jerry's, Cabot Creamery Co-op, Comet Skateboards, Etsy, Patagonia, Plum Organics, and Warby Parker (B Corporation, n.d.; Kim, et al., 2016). View the list of almost 300 Canadian B Corps.

Environmental Protection

Business is also responsible for protecting and improving the world's fragile environment. The world's forests are being destroyed fast. Every second, an area the size of a football field is laid bare. Plant and animal species are becoming extinct at the rate of 17 per hour. A continent-size hole is opening up in the earth's protective ozone shield. Each year we throw out 80 percent more refuse than we did in 1960; as a result, more than half of the nation's landfills are filled to capacity.

To slow the erosion of the world's natural resources, many companies have become more environmentally responsible. For example, Toyota now uses renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, and water power for electricity to run its facilities. When its new $1 billion North American headquarters opened in Plano, Texas, in May 2017, Toyota said the 2.1 million square-foot campus would eventually be powered by 100% clean energy, helping the auto giant move closer to its goal of eliminating carbon emissions in all of its operations (May, 2017; Hardcastle, 2016).

Ethics in Practice

This Fish Story Has a Tasting Ending

Duncan Berry has always been an environmentalist at heart. Brought up on the Oregon coast, he was a sea captain at an early age, spending nearly two decades on the ocean before going on to become a successful entrepreneur in the organic cotton industry. After selling the textile business at the age of 50, he retired back to the Oregon coast to work on a state initiative to preserve marine habitats.

He quickly discovered that the state's commercial fishing industry had gone into major disrepair since his seafaring adventure years earlier. Berry learned the majority of seafood consumed in the United States was being imported from other countries and more than 90 percent of U.S. seafood was being exported. In addition, great harm was being done to the ocean because it was being overfished.

Although several groups were already working to improve the commercial fishing industry, he observed that one key group was not part of the discussion: consumers. Berry decided a key component of change had to be involving consumers in the process. He spent more than a year meeting with everyone involved in the Oregon fishing industry—from fishermen to processors, distributors, truck drivers, chefs, and consumers—to gain perspective on why the industry was failing. His "aha" moment occurred when he realized the majority of fish is consumed in restaurants because consumers think preparing fish at home is too difficult and time-consuming. That's when he co-founded Fishpeople Seafood.

Started in 2012, Fishpeople has a mission of changing the way people think about seafood by being transparent about where the seafood comes from, how it is processed, and how it is handled. Berry believes the company's transparency helps consumers understand how the process translates into sustainable food that tastes good and is good for you. The company makes shelf-stable, ready-to-eat restaurant-quality seafood in the form of soups, meal kits, and fresh and frozen filets, complete with farm-to-table ingredients. On every package there is a code consumers can enter at the company's website that will tell them everything about the seafood's origin, down to the fisherman who caught it. Fishpeople also operates a processing plant in Toledo, Oregon, where workers are paid a livable wage and receive health insurance—benefits typically unheard of in the fishing industry.

Fishpeople's products are available in more than 5,000 stores nationwide, including Walmart, Whole Foods, Costco, Kroger, and other grocery stores and markets. Recently the company announced a merger with Ilwaco Landing Fishermen, which will help further the two groups' shared vision of supporting local fishermen and providing sustainable seafood to consumers.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does Fishpeople's transparency contribute to the company's success?
2. What responsibility, if any, does Fishpeople have to the local fishing industry?

(Buchanan, 2017; Crawford, 2017; David Santen Jr., n.d.; Fishpeople, n.d.; Tillamook Country Pioneer, 2017)

Corporate Philanthropy

Companies also display their social responsibility through **corporate philanthropy**. Corporate philanthropy includes cash contributions, donations of equipment and products, and support for the volunteer efforts of company employees. For example, American Express is a major supporter of the American Red Cross. The organization relies almost entirely on charitable gifts to carry out its programs and services, which include disaster relief, armed-forces emergency relief, blood and tissue services, and health and safety services. The funds provided by American Express have enabled the Red Cross to deliver humanitarian relief to victims of numerous disasters around the world (American Express Company, 2016-2017). When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, Bayer sent 45,000 diabetes blood glucose monitors to the relief effort. Within weeks of the disaster, Abbott, Alcoa, Dell, Disney, Intel, UPS, Walgreens, Walmart, and others contributed more than $550 million for disaster relief (Scott, 2017; Jones, 2005).

Figure 5.2. Hybrid cars and all-electric vehicles such as Tesla models are turning heads and changing the way the world drives. Electric vehicles are more eco-friendly, but they are also more expensive to own. Analysts project that after charging, insurance, and maintenance costs, electric cars cost thousands of dollars more than conventional vehicles. Do the environmental benefits associated with electric cars justify the higher cost of ownership? [Photo] *by* [Steve Jurvetson], [CC BY 2.0]

Responsibilities to Investors

Companies' relationships with investors also entail social responsibility. Although a company's economic responsibility to make a profit might seem to be its main obligation to its shareholders, some investors increasingly are putting more emphasis on other aspects of social responsibility.

Some investors are limiting their investments to securities (e.g., stocks and bonds) that coincide with their beliefs about ethical and social responsibility. This is called social investing. For example, a social investment fund might eliminate from consideration the securities of all companies that make tobacco products or liquor, manufacture weapons, or have a history of being environmentally irresponsible. Not all social investment strategies are alike. Some ethical mutual funds will not invest in government securities because they help to fund the military; others freely buy government securities, with managers noting that federal funds also support the arts and pay for AIDS research. Today, assets invested using socially responsible strategies total more than $7 trillion (Huang, 2017).

Perhaps partly as the result of the global recession of 2007–2009, over the last several years companies have tried to meet responsibilities to their investors as well as to their other stakeholders. Recent research suggests that now more than ever, CEOs are being held to higher standards by boards of directors, investors, governments, media, and even employees when it comes to corporate accountability and ethical behaviour. A recent global study by PwC reveals that over the last several years, there has been a large increase in the number of CEOs being forced out due to some sort of ethical lapse in their organizations. Strategies to prevent such missteps should include establishing a culture of integrity to prevent anyone from breaking the rules, making sure company goals and metrics do not create undue pressure on employees to cut corners, and implementing effective processes and controls to minimize the opportunity for unethical behaviour (Karlsson, et al., 2017; Bianchi & Mohliver, 2017).

5.5 Trends in Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility

> What are the trends in ethics and corporate social responsibility?

Three important trends related to ethics and corporate social responsibility are:

1. Strategic changes in corporate philanthropy
2. A new social contract between employers and employees
3. The growth of global ethics and corporate social responsibility

Changes in Corporate Philanthropy

Historically, corporate philanthropy has typically involved companies seeking out charitable groups and giving them money or donating company products or services. Today, the focus has shifted to strategic giving, which ties philanthropy and corporate social responsibility efforts closely to a company's mission or goals and targets donations to the communities where a company does business.

A Social Contract between Employer and Employee

Another trend in social responsibility is the effort by organizations to redefine their relationship with their employees. Many people have viewed social responsibility as a one-way street that focuses on the obligations of business to society, employees, and others. Now, companies recognize that the social contract between employer and employee is an important aspect of the workplace and that both groups have to be committed to working together in order for the organization to prosper. The social contract can be defined in terms of four important aspects: compensation, management, culture, and learning and development (Burjeck, et al., 2017).

When it comes to compensation, companies today must recognize that most employees do not stay with one organization for decades. Thus, companies need to change their compensation structure to acknowledge the importance of short-term performance and to update their methods for determining compensation, including benefits and other nontraditional perks such as increased paid leave and telecommuting options.

In the current workplace environment, where employees are likely to jump to new jobs every couple years, managers need to take a more active and engaged approach to supervising employees and perhaps change the way they think about loyalty, which may be difficult for managers used to supervising the same group of employees for a long period of time. Engaging employees on a regular basis, setting realistic expectations, and identifying specific development paths may help retain key employees.

Thanks to today's tight labour market, some employees feel empowered to demand more from their employer and its overall culture via strategies such as increased flexibility, transparency, and fairness. This increased importance of the employee's role in the company's culture helps workers stay engaged in the mission of the organization and perhaps makes them less likely to look elsewhere for employment.

Finally, rapidly changing technology used in today's workplace continues to shift the learning and development component of the employer-employee contract, causing immense challenges to both companies and workers. It may be more difficult to identify the employee skills that will be critical over the next several years, causing employers either to increase training of current workers or to look outside the organization for other individuals who already possess the technical skills needed to get the job done.

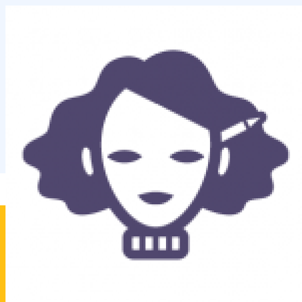
Global Ethics and Social Responsibility

When Canadian businesses expand into global markets, they must take their codes of ethics and policies on corporate social responsibility with them — in fact, organizations are held accountable to Canadian law when they expand internationally, as well as the laws of the host country. As a citizen of several countries, a multinational corporation has several responsibilities. These include respecting local practices and customs, ensuring there is harmony between the organization's staff and the host population, providing management leadership, and developing a solid group of local managers who will be a credit to their community. When a multinational firm makes an investment in a foreign country, it should commit to a long-term relationship. That means involving all stakeholders in the host country in decision-making. Finally, a responsible multinational will implement ethical guidelines within the organization in the host country. By fulfilling these responsibilities, the company will foster respect for both local and international laws.

Multinational corporations often must balance conflicting interests of stakeholders when making decisions regarding social responsibilities, especially in the area of human rights. Questions involving child labour, forced labour, minimum wages, and workplace safety can be particularly difficult. Recently Gap, Inc. decided to publish the list of its global factories in an effort to provide transparency about its suppliers and the efforts the company continues to make to improve working conditions around the world. The company has partnered with Verité, a nongovernmental organization focused on ensuring that people work under safe, fair, and legal conditions. By soliciting feedback from factory workers making its products, Gap is hoping to improve working conditions and help these factories become leaders in their local communities (Gap Inc., n.d.; Human Rights Watch, n.d.).

5.6 Conclusion

Reflection Activity



Returning to the situation Abe is in at the beginning of the chapter, what advice would you provide to Abe now that you have read the chapter?

Should Abe help Martin make the photocopies?

Quick Quiz

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=341#h5p-55

Questions

1. How are individual business ethics formed?
2. What is utilitarianism?
3. How can you recognize unethical activities?

4. What are the four components of social responsibility?
5. Give an example of legal but irresponsible behaviour.
6. How do businesses carry out their social responsibilities to consumers?
7. What is corporate philanthropy?
8. Is a company's only responsibility to its investors to make a profit? Why or why not?
9. Describe strategic giving.
10. What role do employees have in improving their job security?
11. How do multinational corporations demonstrate social responsibility in a foreign country?

Glossary

Business ethics are how we ought to conduct business fairly using real-world situations. Ethical leadership is organizing morals in relation to organizational alignment.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – a form of self-regulation where firms take action and make initiatives to help people and the environment.

Code of ethics – provides employees with the knowledge of what their firm expects in terms of their responsibilities and behaviour toward fellow employees, customers, and suppliers.

Corporate philanthropy includes cash contributions, donations of equipment and products, and support for the volunteer efforts of company employees.

Deontology – means that a person will follow his or her obligations to another individual or society because upholding one's duty is what is considered ethically correct.

Ethics – is a set of moral standards for judging whether something is right or wrong.

Ethical issue – is a situation where someone must choose between a set of actions that may be ethical or unethical.

human rights implies that certain rights—to life, to freedom, to the pursuit of happiness—are bestowed at birth and cannot be arbitrarily taken away.

Justice – an ethical concept of what is fair according to the prevailing standards of society.

Utilitarianism – an ethical concept is that people should act and decisions should be made to reflect the greater good for the greatest number of people.

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5.7 Case study

Air Force Case Study:

The first culprits people think of when they hear of cheating on a test are students. When the Air Force cheating scandal was brought to light, it would not be unreasonable to assume that it occurred in the Air Force Academy. However, the cheating scandal shocked many because it did not involve students or a school. Instead, the cheating occurred among a group of Air Force officers at Malmstrom Air Force base in Montana.

This scandal is one of several that have rocked the Air Force in recent years. In 2008 the chief of staff of the Air Force and a secretary were fired after failing to properly oversee a nuclear mission. In another incident, a general of the Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles force was terminated after an incident involving drinking. The cheating scandal itself has come to light because of an investigation into illegal drug use among 11 officers across six bases. Two of the officers under the drug investigation were implicated in the cheating scandal.

The cheating scandal involved a monthly exam to test the officers' proficiency in areas such as safety and launch protocol. It was estimated that the event took place in August or September in 2013 and involved a whopping 92 officers out of 190 crew members at the Montana air force base. This represents 20 percent of the work force, thought to be the largest scandal in Air Force history. An initial investigation revealed that one of the officers texted the answers to a proficiency exam to 16 others. Further investigation revealed that 17 other officers knew about the cheating but failed to report it. Altogether the scandal involved captains, lieutenants, and junior officers at the base.

The bad news continued to increase. Later investigations revealed that as many as 92 officers were involved in the scandal—nearly half of the crew members at the base. The officers were suspended and decertified. The Malmstrom Air Force base operates about one-third of the 450 Minuteman III nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles. The Air Force maintains that the cheating scandal did not compromise nuclear safety, but the scandal is disturbing nonetheless. As a result of the suspensions and de-certifications, the rest of the officers had to take on extra duties for the time being.

There are signs that all is not well at some of the Air Force bases. While the tests themselves normally have a 97 percent passing rate, the Associated Press revealed that officers had anonymously intimated that they were tempted to cut corners on these tests. It is also notable that in the spring of 2013, 17 officers were de-certified due to bad performance and bad attitudes. In August, the Malmstrom Air Force base failed a nuclear safety and security inspection but passed in October. Air force officers may have felt pressured to cheat so as to earn high marks.

Ethical conduct in businesses involves individual values, organizational factors, and opportunity. It is important for organizations to have controls in place to limit the opportunity for unethical conduct. It would appear the Air Force did not have the necessary controls to prevent such a widespread cheating scandal. Additional pressure to succeed at the tests and threats of punishment likely created an organizational climate that encouraged cutting corners (as several officers had related to the Associated Press). In another AP revelation, a memo was discovered from a missile operations officer who complained that his force was infested with "rot." This does not reflect well on the organizational climate of the base. With both the opportunity and an organizational culture conducive to misconduct, it remained for the officers to individually determine whether to cut corners. Research has frequently indicated that organizational factors often overcome individual inhibitions when the stakes are high; thus, even if the 34 officers had strong values against cheating, they might have decided to engage in this behaviour to avoid negative outcomes.

This leaves the major question of who should be held responsible. Did the Air Force base create a high-pressure culture? With something as serious as nuclear security involved, high standards must be enforced to ensure the officers are familiar with the issues they must know to do their jobs. However, the Air Force has admitted that its culture could be the problem, and that it might spend too much time looking at test scores rather than at the officer's overall ability. In a statement by the Air Force secretary, she admitted that in her travels to three air force bases, officers had intimated that they felt the need to achieve perfection to be promoted. In other words, they felt pressured to score 100 percent on tests. The breadth of the scandal and officer feedback reveals that the Air Force not only lacked the necessary controls to prevent the misconduct, but also might have a cultural problem that indirectly encouraged officers to do what it took to excel.

Activity: Ethical Dilemma Case Study

- Read the case study.
- Complete the three questions below.
- Feel free to share with a fellow classmate or during an in-class discussion.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=824#h5p-54

CHAPTER 6: LISTENING, RESPONDING AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Chapter Preview

6.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, learners will be able to:

- Define intrapersonal and interpersonal communication.
- Give examples of interpersonal needs in the communication process.
- Discuss social penetration theory and self-disclosure and its principles.
- List five steps in any conversation.
- Explain the importance of being an active listener.

Professional Perspective

Dhavit will be interviewing a group of potential employees to fill a role called "Library Coordinator." In this role, an employee will need to have excellent communication skills to interact with a variety of visitors to the library including faculty members, staff, and students. Dhavit wants to ensure he includes some good questions in his interview script to determine interpersonal skills among the applicants. What types of questions might Dhavit ask to find out more from each candidate?

The majority of the time we are working we are involved in the process of communication; communication with self, with others, in verbal (oral and written) and in nonverbal formats. How well you communicate affects your experience in the business environment. Through communication, how might you negotiate relationships, demands for space and time, challenging meetings, collaborative efforts, and solo projects? In this chapter, you will explore several concepts around communicating.

6.1 Interpersonal Communication

We communicate with each other to meet our needs, regardless of how we define those needs. From the time you are a newborn infant crying for food or a toddler learning to say "thank you" for your meal, to the time you are an adult learning the rituals of the job interview or how to negotiate a critical deal, you are learning to communicate in order to meet your evolving needs. As you do so, you gain a sense of self within the group or community.

This idea of sharing our experiences, whether it be positive, or negative is interpersonal communication. When we offer information to other people and they offer information towards us, it is defined as interpersonal communication.

Interpersonal Communication is communication between two or more people. It can be informal, such as a conversation in a checkout line; it can also be formal, such as in a job interview or a business presentation. Although we often think of interpersonal communication as verbal, it can be nonverbal as well. Think of a situation where someone asks what you want to do and you answer with a shrug of your shoulders, or a speaker asks if you can hear her at the back of the room and you answer with a "thumbs up". Interpersonal communication often occurs in face-to-face contexts where it is unplanned and spontaneous. Think about the conversations you have with your family and friends. Interpersonal communication will be necessary your entire life, so it is important to hone your skills. At most colleges, public speaking is a required course, yet many students do not believe they will be making public speeches during their career. If you think about it however, you will likely be doing many forms of public speaking on a smaller scale: your boss may ask you to fill the team in on how your last project went, or it may be necessary to discuss a loved one's medical needs with their care team; you may have a child who is struggling and need to advocate on their behalf at a parent-teacher conference, or you may want to negotiate on price with a couple selling you a used vehicle. Interpersonal communication can help us achieve our personal and professional goals.

Aside from making your relationships and health better, interpersonal communication skills are highly sought after by potential employers, consistently ranking in the top ten in national surveys (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2010). Interpersonal communication meets our basic needs as humans for security in our social bonds, health, and careers. But we are not born with all the interpersonal communication skills we'll need in life.

In this chapter, you will learn about ways to make communication more effective. You will learn about communication models that might influence how a message is sent and/or received. You will also learn about characteristics that influence the message and can cause others not to accept or understand the message that you were trying to send.

Social Penetration Theory

How do you get to know other people? If the answer springs immediately to mind, then we're getting somewhere: communication. Communication allows us to share experiences, come to know ourselves and others, and form relationships, but it requires time and effort. Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor describe this progression from superficial to intimate levels of communication in social penetration theory, which is often called the Onion Theory because the model looks like an onion and involves layers that are peeled away (Altman & Taylor, 1973). According to social penetration theory, we fear that which we do not know. That includes people. Strangers go from being unknown to known through a series of steps that we can observe through conversational interactions.

In this model, at the outermost layer of the onion there is only that which we can observe. We can observe characteristics about each other and make judgments, but they are educated guesses at best. Our nonverbal displays of affiliation, like a team jacket, a uniform, or a badge, may communicate something about us, but we only peel away a layer when we engage in conversation, oral or written.

You generally begin getting to know someone with small talk – conversations with less personal details, where you discuss things such as the weather. You rarely tell our life story to a stranger, but as you move from public to private information, you make the transition from small talk to more substantial conversations. As relationships deepen, conversations become more intimate. Communication requires trust and that often takes time. Beginning relationships are more fragile, and when expectations, roles, and ways of communicating are not clear, misunderstandings can occur.

According to the **social penetration theory**, people go from superficial to intimate conversations as trust develops through repeated, positive interactions. **Self-disclosure** is "information, thoughts, or feelings we tell others about ourselves that they would not otherwise know" (McLean, 2005). Taking it step by step, and not rushing to self-disclose or asking personal questions too soon, can help develop positive business relationships. Figure 6.1 below, an image of onion layers resembles the process of building interpersonal communication relationships.

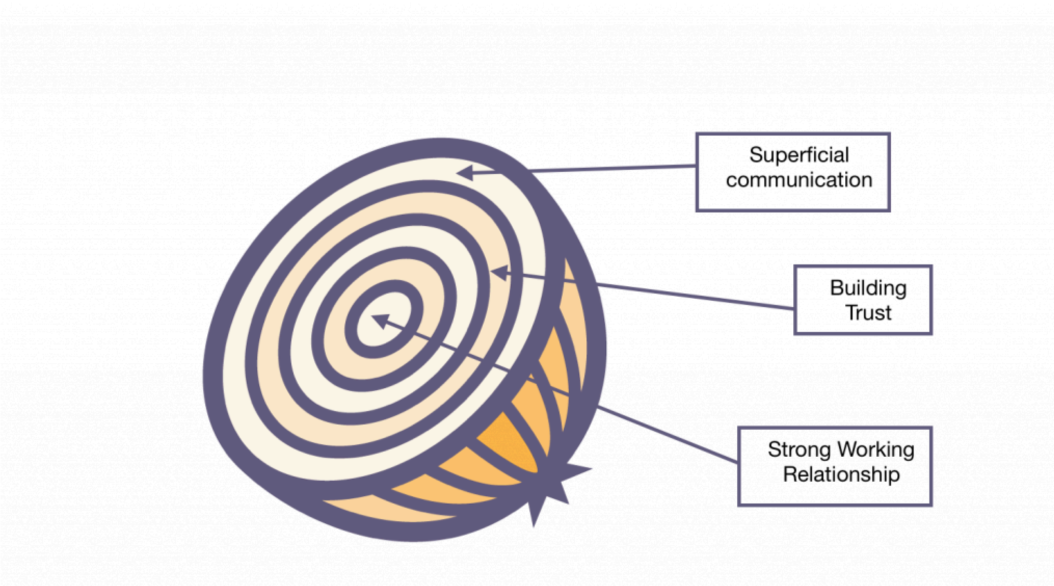

Figure 6.1. Layers of disclosure in interpersonal communication.

Principles of Self-Disclosure

Along with sharing information, thoughts, or feelings verbally, it is important to consider what you communicate about yourself through the clothes (or brands) you wear, the tattoos you display, or the piercing you remove before you enter the workplace. Self-disclosure is a process by which you intentionally communicate information to others, but can involve unintentional slips that may reveal more than you planned. Nonverbal communication, in particular personal style which was discussed earlier in this text, is important to be aware of.

Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships are the interactions between people – the bonds, connections or associations we have with others – whether they be rather fleeting or very intimate. If you have ever had even a minor interpersonal transaction such as buying a cup of coffee from a clerk, you know that some people can be personable, but does that mean you've developed a relationship through the transaction process? For many people, the transaction is an impersonal experience, however pleasant. You may, however, hit it off with your hairdresser; after a couple of months visiting his salon you determine that your families have a lot in common and invite his partner and children to a barbeque at your home. What is the difference between the brief interaction of a transaction and the interactions you periodically have with your hairdresser? Or between your hairdresser and your closest colleague, who was recently promoted as your manager, so you no longer go out together on Friday nights? What is the status of these relationships?

The developmental view places an emphasis on the prior history but also focuses on the level of familiarity and trust. Over time and with increased frequency we form bonds or relationships with people; if time and frequency are diminished, we lose that familiarity. The relationship with the clerk may be impersonal, but so can the relationship with the manager become, after time has passed and familiarity is lost. On the other hand, we may become very close friends with our hairdresser and his partner, as our families become best friends whose relationships last for decades.

In the business environment, interpersonal communication is necessary, regardless of whether we focus on collaboration or competition. We want to know our place and role within the organization, accurately decipher what is happening around us, and create a sense of safety and belonging. Family is the first experience in interpersonal relationships, but as we develop professionally, our relationships at work may take on many of the attributes we associate with family communication. We may view colleagues in a way that is similar to sibling rivalries, thus we may begin competing for attention and resources, or contending for support. The workplace and our peers can become as close, or closer, than our birth families – with similar challenges and rewards.

To summarize, interpersonal relationships are an important part of everyday life, and building our interpersonal communication skills helps strengthen our business and personal relationships. We come to know one another gradually (layer by layer). The principle of self-disclosure is a normal part of communication.

6.2 What is Intrapersonal Communication?

Intrapersonal communication can be defined as communication with one's self, and that may include self-talk, acts of imagination and visualization, and even recall and memory (McLean, 2005). You read on your phone that your friends are going to have dinner at your favourite restaurant. What comes to mind? Sights, sounds, and scents? Something special that happened the last time you were there? Do you contemplate joining them? Do you start to work out a plan of getting from your present location to the restaurant? Do you send your friends a text asking if they want company? Until the moment when you hit the "send" button, you are communicating with yourself.

Communications expert Leonard Shedletsky examined intrapersonal communication through the eight basic components of the communication process (i.e., source, receiver, message, channel, feedback, environment, context, and interference) as transactional, but all the interaction occurs within the individual (Shedletsky, 1989).

From planning to problem solving, internal conflict resolution to evaluations and judgments of self and others, we communicate with ourselves through intrapersonal communication.

All of this interaction takes place in the mind without externalization, and all of it relies on previous interaction with the external world.

Watch the following 1 minute video on *Intrapersonal Communication*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=226#oembed-1

Video: Intrapersonal Communication by Marienela Faye Lungay [1:22] Captions/Transcript Unavailable

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6.3 Self-Concept

Understanding that our self-concept, or the way we define ourselves, is often based on our actions…which actions most define us, and are we no longer ourselves when we no longer engage in those activities? For example, a physician may define herself as a doctor, but how will she define herself once she has retired? Psychologist Steven Pinker defines the conscious present as about three seconds for most people. Everything else is past or future (Pinker, 2009). Who are you at this moment in time, and will the self you become an hour from now be different from the self that is reading this sentence right now?

Just as the communication process is dynamic, not static (i.e., always changing, not staying the same), you too are a dynamic system. Physiologically your body is in a constant state of change as you inhale and exhale air, digest food, and cleanse waste from each cell. Psychologically you are changing as well. Some aspects of your personality and character will be constant, while others will shift and adapt to your environment and context. These complex combinations contribute to the self you call you. You may choose to define yourself by your own sense of individuality, personal characteristics, motivations, and actions (McLean, 2005), but any definition you create will likely fail to capture all of who you are, and who you will become.

Self-Concept

Self-concept is "what we perceive ourselves to be," (McLean, 2005) and involves aspects of image and esteem. How we see ourselves and how we feel about ourselves influences how we communicate with others. What you are thinking now and how you communicate impacts and influences how others treat you. In a previous chapter you reviewed the concept of the looking glass self. We look at how others treat us, what they say and how they say it, for clues about how they view us to gain insight into our own identity. Developing a sense of self as a communicator involves balance between constructive feedback from others and constructive self-affirmation. You judge yourself, as others do, and both views count.

Self-reflection is a trait that allows us to adapt and change to our context or environment, to accept or reject messages, to examine our concept of ourselves and to choose to improve (or not).

Internal monologue refers to the self-talk of intrapersonal communication. It can be a running monologue that is rational and reasonable, or disorganized and illogical. Your self-monologue can empower and energize you or it can unintentionally interfere with listening to others, impede your ability to focus, and become a barrier to effective communication.

You have to make a choice to listen to others when they communicate through the written or spoken word. Refraining from preparing your responses before others finish speaking (or before you finish reading what they have said) is good listening, and essential for relationship-building. It's good listening practice to take mental note of when you jump to conclusions from only partially attending to the speaker or writer's message. There is certainly value in choosing to listen to others in addition to yourself.

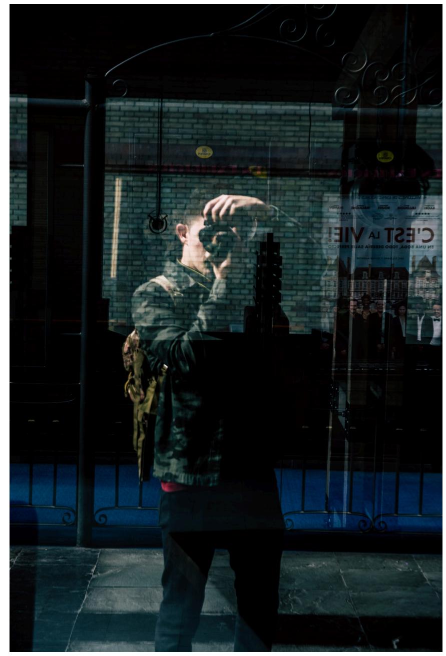

Photo by Pablo Guerrero, on Unsplash License

One principle of communication is that interaction is dynamic and changing. Interaction can be internal, as in intrapersonal communication, but can also be external. We may communicate with one other person and engage in paired interpersonal communication. If we engage two or more individuals, group communication is the result.

To summarize, self-concept involves multiple dimensions and is expressed as internal monologue and social comparisons. Self-concept can be informed by engaging in dialogue with one or more people, and through reading or listening to spoken works; attending to what others communicate can add value to your self-concept.

6.4 Rituals of Conversation

You no doubt have participated in countless conversations throughout your life, and the process of how to conduct a conversation may seem so obvious that it needs no examination. Yet, all cultures have rituals of various kinds, and conversation is one of these universal rituals. A skilled business communicator knows when to speak, when to remain silent, and to always stop speaking before the audience stops listening. Expectations may differ based on the type of conversation and the knowledge and experience of participants, but here are the basic five steps of a conversation.

Photo by Mihai Surdu, Unsplash License

Conversation as a Ritual

Steven Beebe, Susan Beebe, and Mark Redmond offer us five stages of conversation that are adapted here for our discussion (Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, 2002).

Figure 6.2 "Stages of Communication" by Freddy Vale CC-BY-NC-SA

1. Initiation

The first stage of conversation is called initiation, and requires you to be open to interact. How you communicate openness is up to you; it may involve nonverbal signals like eye contact or body positions, you may be smiling or facing the other person and making eye contact. For some, this may produce a degree of anxiety. If status and hierarchical relationships are present, it may be a question of who speaks when, according to cultural norms.

2. Preview

The preview is an indication, verbal or nonverbal, of what the conversation is about, both in terms of content and in terms of the relationship. A word or two in the subject line of an email may signal the topic, and the relationship between individuals, such as an employee-supervisor relationship, may be understood. A preview can serve to reduce uncertainty and signal intent.

3. Talking Point(s)

Joseph DeVito characterizes this step as getting down to business, reinforcing the goal orientation of the conversation (DeVito, 2003). In business communication, we often have a specific goal or series of points to address, but we cannot lose sight of the relationship messages within the discussion of content. By clearly articulating the main points, either in written or oral form, you provide an outline or structure to the conversation.

4. Feedback

Similar to a preview step, this stage allows the conversational partners to clarify, restate, or discuss the points of the conversation to arrive at a sense of mutual understanding. Western cultures often get to the point rather quickly and once an understanding is established there is a quick move to the conclusion.

Feedback is an opportunity to make sure the interaction was successful the first time. Failure to attend to this stage can lead to the need for additional interactions, reducing efficiency across time.

5. Closing

The acceptance of feedback on both sides of the conversation often signals the transition to the conclusion of the conversation.

There are times when a conversational partner introduces new information in the conclusion, which can start the process all over again. You may also note that if words like "in conclusion" or "oh—one more thing" are used, a set of expectations is now in force. A conclusion has been announced and the listener expects it. If the speaker continues to recycle at this point, the listener's listening skills are often not as keen as they were during the heat of the main engagement, and it may even produce frustration. People mentally shift to the next order of business and this transition must be negotiated successfully.

By mentioning a time, date, or place for future communication you can clearly signal that the conversation, although currently concluded, will continue later. In this way, you can often disengage successfully while demonstrating respect.

6.5 Listening for Understanding

Learning to listen to your conversational partner, customer, supplier, or supervisor is an important part of business communication. Often, instead of listening, you mentally rehearse how you are going to respond or are busy trying to multitask so are not paying full attention. Inattentive listening can cause you to miss much of what the speaker is sharing with you.

Communication involves the sharing and understanding of meaning. To fully share and understand, practice active listening so that you are truly focused on the speaker and fully present in the moment of interaction. Pay attention to both the actual words and other clues to meaning, such as tone of voice or body language. Look for opportunities for clarification and feedback when the time comes for you to respond, not before.

Active Listening

You've probably experienced the odd sensation of driving somewhere and, having arrived, realized you don't remember driving through your route. Your mind may have been filled with other issues and you drove on autopilot. It's dangerous when you drive like that, and it is dangerous in communication. Choosing to listen attentively takes effort. People communicate with words, expressions, and even in silence, and your attention to all of these factors will make you a better communicator. From discussions on improving customer service to retaining customers in challenging economic times, the importance of listening comes up frequently as a success strategy.

Here are some tips to facilitate active listening:

- Maintain eye contact with the speaker
- Don't interrupt and don't multitask
- Focus your attention on the message rather than your own internal monologue
- Restate the message in your own words and ask if you understood correctly
- Ask clarifying questions to communicate interest and gain insight

When the Going Gets Tough

Tips in this chapter will serve you well in daily interactions, but suppose you have an especially difficult subject to discuss, or you receive some really bad news. In a difficult situation like this, it is worth taking extra effort to create an environment and context that will facilitate positive communication.

Here are some strategies that may be helpful:

- Set aside a special time. To have a difficult conversation set aside a special time when you will not be disturbed. Close the door and turn off the TV, music player, phone and/or instant messaging.
- Don't interrupt. Keep silent while you let the other person "speak his or her piece." Make an effort to understand and digest the message without mental interruptions.
- Be nonjudgmental. Receive the message without judgment or criticism. Set aside your opinions, attitudes, and beliefs.
- Be accepting. Be open to the message being communicated, realizing that acceptance does not necessarily mean

you agree with what is being said.

- Take turns. Wait until it is your turn to respond, and then measure your response in proportion to the message that was delivered to you. Reciprocal turn-taking allows each person have her of his say.
- Acknowledge. Let the other person know that you have listened to the message attentively.
- Understand. Be certain that you understand what your partner is saying. If you don't understand, ask for clarification. Restate the message in your own words.
- Keep your cool. Speak your truth without blaming. A calm tone will help prevent the conflict from escalating. Use "I" statements (e.g., "I felt concerned when I learned that my department is going to have a layoff") rather than "you" statements (e.g., "you want to get rid of some of our best people").
- Finally, recognize that mutual respect and understanding are built one conversation at a time. Trust is difficult to gain and easy to lose. Be patient and keep the channels of communication open, as a solution may develop slowly over the course of many small interactions. Recognize that it is more valuable to maintain the relationship over the long term than to "win" in an individual transaction.

Watch the following 8 minute video from Julian Treasure: 5 Ways to Listen Better

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=94#oembed-1

Video: 5 Ways To Listen Better by TED [7:50] Transcript Available

To summarize this section, part of being an effective communicator is learning to receive messages from others through active listening.

6.6 Conclusion

Reflection Activity

Returning to Dhavit's interview process, what types of questions would you ask potential candidates about their interpersonal and conflict management communication skills related to the busy role of Library Coordinator? If you were applying for this role, how would you prepare?

Quick Quiz

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=243#h5p-38*

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=243#h5p-39*

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=243#h5p-40*

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=243#h5p-41

Additional Resources

Read an informative article and watch a video on self-concept and self-esteem https://mindspo.com/2020/08/10/brene-browns-top-10-rules-for-self-love/

Advice from Berkeley Well-Being Institute on interpersonal communication: https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/interpersonal-communication.html

Globe and Mail: *Conflict-management skills now in high demand in the workplace*.

Glossary

Internal monologue – refers to the self-talk of intrapersonal communication.

Interpersonal communication – the process of exchanging messages between two people whose lives mutually influence one another in unique ways in relation to social and cultural norms.

Intrapersonal communication – communication with one's self, and that may include self-talk, acts of imagination and visualization, and even recall and memory.

Self-concept – what we perceive ourselves to be.

Self-disclosure – information, thoughts, or feelings we tell others about ourselves that they would not otherwise know.

Self-reflection – a trait that allows us to adapt and change to our context or environment, to accept or reject messages, to examine our concept of ourselves and choose to improve.

Social penetration theory – people go from superficial to intimate conversations as trust develops through repeated, positive interactions.

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CHAPTER 7: TEAMWORK, LEADERSHIP & CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Chapter Preview

7.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, learners will be able to:

- Define groups and teams.
- Identify the typical stages in the life cycle of a group.
- Describe types of group members and group member roles.
- Describe teamwork and how to overcome challenges to group success.
- Describe leadership styles and their likely influence on followers.
- Describe several strategies for resolving workplace conflict related to evaluations and criticism.
- Explain the types of conflict.

Professional Perspective

Abe works in a team with other financial analysts to complete projects for the finance department. Each member has a different level of experience in the company and in their career. They also have different perspectives and ideas on how the job should be done. One of Abe's co-workers is uncomfortable using technology and the new software that the company has invested in. Abe has been practicing and taking courses to learn the software and likes using it. She finds it much more efficient, however, the team needs to be on the same page. What should Abe do?

Interpersonal communication occurs between two people, but group communication may involve two or more individuals. Groups are a primary context for interaction within the business community. Groups overlap and may share common goals, but they may also engage in conflict. Within a group, individuals may behave in distinct ways, use unique or specialized terms, or display symbols that have meaning to that group. Those same terms or symbols may be confusing, meaningless, or even unacceptable to another group. An individual may belong to multiple groups, adapting their communication patterns to meet group normative expectations.

7.1 What is a Group?

Most humans form self-identities through their communication with others, and much of that interaction occurs in a group context. A **group** may be defined as three or more individuals who affiliate, interact, or cooperate in a familial, social, or work context. Basically, group members have something in common that sets them apart from those around them, whether that is assigned or chosen (such as a work team or an accounting class) or more naturally occurring (such as a family or cultural group). **Group communication** may be defined as the exchange of information and meaning between three or more people. Those individuals could be alike culturally, linguistically, and/or geographically. Group members may be known by their symbols, such as patches and insignia on a military uniform. They may be known by their use of specialized language or jargon. Group members may also be known by their proximity, as in gated communities. Regardless of how the group defines itself, and regardless of the extent to which its borders are porous or permeable, a group recognizes itself as a group. Humans naturally make groups a part of their context or environment.

Types of Groups in the Workplace

Learning more about groups, group dynamics, management, and leadership will serve you well. Groups may be defined by function. They can also be defined, from a developmental viewpoint, by relationships within the group. Groups can be discussed in terms of their relationship to the individual and the degree to which they meet interpersonal needs. Some groups may be assembled at work to solve problems, and once the challenge has been resolved, they may dissolve into previous or yet to be determined groups. These temporary problem-solving groups are called functional groups and may be familiar to you. Almost all businesses involve groups, however mergers, forced sales, downsizing, and entering new markets call upon individuals to have even stronger teamwork skills.

In an academic or professional context, being a member of a discipline offers a similar framework for viewing the world. Disciplines involve a common set of theories that explain the world, terms to explain those theories, and have an applied purpose related to increasing knowledge. In business, you will likely have colleagues that are members of other disciplines, such as marketing. Marketing experts and other members of the marketing department may perceive their tasks differently from a member of the sales staff or someone in accounting. You may work in the mailroom, and the mailroom staff is a group in itself, both distinct from and interconnected with the larger organization.

Relationships are part of any group and can be described in terms of status, power, control, as well as role, function, or viewpoint. Relationships are formed through communication and interaction across time, and often share a common history, values, and beliefs about the world around us.

Through conversations and a shared sense that you and your coworkers belong together, you meet many of your basic human needs, such as the need to feel included, the need for affection, and the need for control (Schutz, 1966). In a work context, “affection” may sound odd, but we all experience affection at work in the form of friendly comments like “good morning,” “have a nice weekend,” and “good job!” Our professional lives also fulfill more than just our basic needs (i.e., air, food, and water, as well as safety). While your work group may be gathered together with common goals, such as to deliver the mail in a timely fashion to the proper departments and individuals, your daily interactions may well go beyond this functional perspective.

Primary and Secondary Groups

There are fundamentally two types of groups, primary and secondary. The hierarchy denotes the degree to which the group(s) meet your interpersonal needs. **Primary groups** meet most, if not all, of one's needs. Groups that meet some, but not all, needs are called **secondary groups**. Secondary groups often include work groups, where the goal is to complete a task or solve a problem. Secondary groups may meet your need for professional acceptance and celebrate your success, but they may not meet your need for understanding and sharing on a personal level.

In terms of problem-solving, work groups can accomplish more than individuals can. People, each of whom have specialized skills, talents, experience, or education come together in new combinations with new challenges, and find new perspectives to create unique approaches that they themselves would not have formulated alone. Working in groups helps to increase an organization's creativity and innovation, and helps the organization to better compete in the marketplace.

If Two's Company and Three's a Crowd, What Is a Group?

This old cliché refers to the human tendency to form pairs. Pairing is the most basic form of relationship formation; it applies to childhood best friends, college roommates, romantic couples, business partners, and many other dyads (two-person relationships). A group, by definition, includes at least three people. We can categorize groups in terms of their size and complexity.

The larger the group grows, the more likely it is to subdivide. Analysis of these smaller, or microgroups, is increasingly a point of study as the internet allows individuals to join people of similar mind or habit to share virtually anything across time and distance. A **microgroup** is a small, independent group that has a link, affiliation, or association with a larger group. With each additional group member the number of possible interactions increases (Harris & Sherblom, 1999; McLean, 2003).

Small groups normally contain between three and eight people. One person may involve intrapersonal communication, while two may constitute interpersonal communication, and both may be present within a group communication context.

Group norms are customs, standards, and behavioural expectations that emerge as a group forms. If you post an update every day on your Facebook page and your friends stop by to post on your wall and comment, not posting for a week will violate a group norm. They will wonder if you are sick or in the hospital where you have no access to a computer to keep them updated. If, however, you only post once a week, the group will come to naturally expect your customary post. Norms involve expectations that are self and group imposed and that often arise as groups form and develop.

If there are more than eight members, it becomes a challenge to have equal participation, where everyone has a chance to speak, listen, and respond. Some will dominate, others will recede, and smaller groups will form. Finding a natural balance within a group can also be a challenge. Small groups need to have enough members to generate a rich and stimulating exchange of ideas, information, and interaction, but not so many people that what each brings cannot be shared (Galanes et al, 2000).

In summary, we form self-identities through communication in a group context. Groups consist of more than two people who affiliate, interact, or cooperate in a familial, social, or work context. Group communication may be defined as the exchange of information between three or more people. There are two types of groups: (1) primary groups, which meet most, if not all, of one's needs and (2) secondary groups that meet some, but not all, of one's needs. Groups help increase creativity and innovation and lead to better solutions to complex problems.

7.2 Group Life Cycles and Member Roles

Groups are dynamic systems in constant change. Groups grow together and often come apart – people join groups and others leave for a variety of reasons. This dynamic results in changes that can transform the very nature of the group. Those who are in leadership positions may ascend or descend the leadership hierarchy as the needs of the group, and other circumstances, change over time.

Group socialization involves how the group members interact with one another and form relationships.

Group Life Cycle Patterns

In order to better understand group development and its life cycle, many researchers have described the universal stages and phases of groups. While there are modern interpretations of these stages, most draw from the model proposed by Bruce Tuckman (1965). This model, shown in Figure 7.1, specifies the usual order of the phases of group development as a cycle, and allows us to predict several stages we can anticipate as we join a new group.

Figure 7.1. Tuckman's Linear Model of group development.

Tuckman (1965) describes the five stages as follows:

- **Forming:** Members come together, learn about each other, and determine the purpose of the group.
- **Storming:** Members engage in more direct communication and get to know each other. Conflicts between group members will often arise during this stage.
- **Norming:** Members establish spoken or unspoken rules about how they communicate and work. Status, rank, and roles in the group are established.
- **Performing:** Members fulfill their purpose and reach their goal.
- **Adjourning:** Members leave the group

Tuckman begins with the **forming stage** as the initiation of group formation. This stage is also called the **orientation stage** because individual group members come to know each other. Group members who are new to each other and can't predict each other's behaviour, can be expected to experience the stress of uncertainty. Uncertainty theory states that humans choose to know more about others with whom they have interactions in order to reduce or resolve the anxiety associated with the unknown (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Berger, 1986; Gudykunst, 1995). The more we know about others and become accustomed to how they communicate, the better we can predict how they will interact with us in future contexts. If you learn that Monday mornings are never a good time for your supervisor, you quickly learn to schedule meetings later in the week.

If you don't know someone very well, it is easy to offend. Each group member brings to the group a set of experiences, combined with education and a self-concept. You won't be able to read this information on a nametag, but will come to know it through time and interaction. Since the possibility of overlapping and competing viewpoints and perspectives exists, the group will experience a **storming stage**, a time of struggles as the members themselves sort out their differences. There may be more than one way to solve the problem or task at hand, and some group members may prefer one strategy over another. Some members of the group may be more senior to the organization, and members may treat them differently. Some group members may be at a similar level but may be uncertain about everyone's talents, skills, roles, and self-perceptions. The wise business communicator will anticipate the storming stage and help facilitate opportunities for the members to resolve uncertainty before the group's work commences. There may be challenges for leadership, and conflicting viewpoints. A clear definition of the purpose and mission of the group can help the members focus their energies. If group members have some interaction prior to the first meeting it can help reduce uncertainty.

The **norming stage** is where the group establishes norms, or informal rules, for behaviour and interaction. Who speaks first? Who takes notes? Who is creative, who is visual, and who is detail-oriented? Sometimes job titles and functions speak for themselves, but human beings are complex. We are not simply a list of job functions, and in today's dynamic business environment you will often find that people have talents and skills well beyond their "official" role or task. Drawing on these strengths can make the group more effective.

The norming stage is marked by less division and more collaboration. The level of anxiety associated with interaction is generally reduced, making for a more positive work climate that promotes listening. When people feel less threatened and their needs are met, they are more likely to focus their complete attention on the purpose of the group. Tensions are reduced when the normative expectations are known, and the degree to which a manager can describe these at the outset can reduce the amount of time the group remains in uncertainty. Group members generally express more satisfaction and are more inclined to participate when clear expectations are set.

Ultimately, the purpose of a work group is performance, and the preceding stages lead to the **performing stage**, in which the group accomplishes its mandate, fulfills its purpose, and reaches its goals. To facilitate performance, group members can't skip the initiation of getting to know each other or the sorting out of roles and norms, but they can try to focus on performance with clear expectations from the moment the group is formed. Productivity is often how we measure success in business and industry, and the group has to produce. Outcome assessments may have been built into the system from the beginning to serve as a benchmark for success. If the goal is to create a community where competition pushes each member to perform, individual highlights may serve your needs, but if you want a group to solve a problem or address a challenge, you have to promote group cohesion.

In the **adjourning stage**, members leave the group. The group may cease to exist or it may be transformed with new members and a new set of goals. Like life, the group process is normal, and mixed emotions are to be expected. A wise manager anticipates this stage and facilitates the separation with skill and ease. We often close this process with a ritual marking its passing. The ritual may be as formal as an award or as informal as a "thank you" or a verbal acknowledgement of a job well done. It is important not to forget that groups can reach the adjourning stage without having achieved success. Some businesses go bankrupt, some departments are closed, and some individuals lose their positions after a group fails to perform. Adjournment can come suddenly and unexpectedly, or gradually and piece by piece. Either way, a skilled business communicator will be prepared and recognize it as part of the classic group life cycle.

Watch the following 2 minute video *Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing*: *Bruce Tuckman's Team Stages Model Explained*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=273#oembed-1

Video: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing: Bruce Tuckman's Team Stages Model Explained by MindToolsVideos [1:58] Transcript Available

Life Cycle of Member Roles

Just as groups go through a life cycle when they form and eventually adjourn, so the group members fulfill different roles during this life cycle. These roles, proposed by Richard Moreland and John Levine (1982), are summarized in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Life Cycle of Member Roles

Potential Member	Curiosity and interest
New Member	Joined the group but still an outsider and unknown
Full Member	Knows the "rules" and is looked to for leadership
Divergent Member	Focuses on differences
Marginal Member	No longer involved
Ex-Member	No longer considered a member

Positive and Negative Member Roles

If someone in your group always makes everyone laugh, that can be a distinct asset when the news is less than positive. At times when you have to get work done, however, the class clown may become a distraction. Notions of positive and negative will often depend on the context when discussing groups. Table 7.2 "Positive Roles" and Table 7.3 "Negative Roles" list both positive and negative roles people sometimes play in a group setting (Beene & Sheets, 1948; McLean, 2005).

Table 7.2 Positive Roles.

Initiator-Coordinator	Suggests new ideas or new ways of looking at the problem
Elaborator	Builds on ideas and provides examples
Coordinator	Brings ideas, information, and suggestions together
Evaluator-Critic	Evaluates ideas and provides constructive criticism
Recorder	Records ideas, examples, suggestions, and critiques

Table 7.3 Negative Roles

Dominator	Dominates discussion, not allowing others to take their turn
Recognition Seeker	Relates discussion to their accomplishments; seeks attention
Special-Interest Pleader	Relates discussion to special interest or personal agenda
Blocker	Blocks attempts at consensus consistently
Joker or Clown	Seeks attention through humour and distracts group members

Now that you've reviewed positive and negative group member roles, you may examine another perspective. While some personality traits and behaviours may negatively influence groups, some traits can be positive or negative depending on the context.

Just as the class clown can have a positive effect in lifting spirits or a negative effect in distracting members, a dominator may be exactly what is needed for quick action. An emergency physician doesn't have time to ask all the group members in the emergency unit how they feel about a course of action; instead, a self-directed approach based on training and experience may be necessary. In contrast, a teacher may ask students their opinions about a change in the format of class; in this situation, the role of coordinator or elaborator is more appropriate than that of dominator.

The group is together because they have a purpose or goal, and normally they are capable of more than any one individual member could be on their own, so it would be inefficient to hinder that progress. But a blocker, who cuts off collaboration, does just that. If a group member interrupts another and presents a viewpoint or information that suggests a different course of action, the point may be well taken and serve the collaborative process. But if that same group member repeatedly engages in blocking behaviour, then the behaviour becomes a problem. A skilled business communicator will learn to recognize the difference, even when positive and negative situations and roles aren't completely clear.

7.3 Group Problem Solving

The problem-solving process involves thoughts, discussions, actions, and decisions that occur from the first consideration of a problematic situation to the goal. The problems that groups face are varied, but some common problems include budgeting funds, raising funds, planning events, addressing customer or citizen complaints, creating or adapting products or services to fit needs, supporting members, and raising awareness about issues or causes.

While there are many ways to approach a problem, the American educational philosopher John Dewey's reflective thinking sequence has stood the test of time. This seven-step process (Adler, 1996) has produced positive results and serves as a handy organizational structure. If you are member of a group that needs to solve a problem and don't know where to start, consider the seven simple steps illustrated in Figure 7.2 below:

Figure 7.2. Problem-solving process.

Step 1: Define the Problem

If you don't know what the problem is, how do you know you can solve it? Defining the problem allows the group to set boundaries of what the problem is and what it is not and to begin to formalize a description or definition of the scope, size, or extent of the challenge the group will address. A problem that is too broadly defined can overwhelm the group. If the problem is too narrowly defined, important information will be missed or ignored.

In the following example, there is a web-based company called Favourites that needs to increase its customer base and ultimately sales. A problem-solving group has been formed, and they start by formulating a working definition of the problem.

Example problems:

Too broad**:** "Sales are off, our numbers are down, and we need more customers."

More precise**:** "Sales have been slipping incrementally for six of the past nine months and are significantly lower than a seasonally adjusted comparison to last year. Overall, this loss represents a 4.5 percent reduction in sales from the same time last year. However, when we break it down by product category, sales of our nonedible products have seen a modest but steady increase, while sales of edibles account for the drop off and we need to halt the decline."

Step 2: Analyze the Problem

The problem-solving group Kevin, Mariah, and Suri analyze the problem and begin to gather information to learn more. The problem is complex and requires more than one area of expertise. Why do nonedible products continue selling well? What is it about the edibles that is turning customers off?

Kevin is responsible for customer resource management. He is involved with the customer from the point of initial contact through purchase and delivery. Most of the interface is automated in the form of an online "basket model," where photographs and product descriptions are accompanied by "buy it" buttons. He is available during normal working business hours for live chat and voice chat if needed, and customers are invited to request additional information. Most *Favourites* customers do not access this service, but Kevin is kept quite busy, as he also handles returns and complaints. Because Kevin believes that superior service retains customers while attracting new ones, he is always interested in better ways to serve the customer. Looking at edibles and nonedibles, he will study the cycle of customer service and see if there are any common points—from the main webpage, through the catalogue, to the purchase process, and to returns—at which customers abandon the sale. He has existing customer feedback loops with end-of-sale surveys, but most customers decline to take the survey and there is currently no incentive to participate.

Mariah is responsible for products and purchasing. She wants to offer the best products at the lowest price, and to offer new products that are unusual, rare, or exotic. She regularly adds new products to the *Favourites* catalogue and culls underperformers. Right now she has the data on every product and its sales history, but it is a challenge to represent it. She will analyze current sales data and produce a report that specifically identifies how each product—edible and nonedible—is performing. She wants to highlight "winners" and "losers" but also recognizes that today's "losers" may be the hit of tomorrow. It is hard to predict constantly changing tastes and preferences, but that is part of her job. It's not all science, and it's not all art. She has to have an eye for what will catch on tomorrow while continuing to provide what is hot today.

Suri is responsible for data management at *Favourites*. She gathers, analyzes, and presents information gathered from the supply chain, sales, and marketing. She works with vendors to make sure products are available when needed, makes sales predictions based on past sales history, and assesses the effectiveness of marketing campaigns.

The problem-solving group members already have certain information on hand. They know that customer retention is one contributing factor. Attracting new customers is a constant goal, but they are aware of the well-known principle that it takes more effort to attract new customers than to keep existing ones. Thus, it is important to ensure a quality customer service experience for existing customers and encourage them to refer friends. The group needs to determine how to promote this favourable customer behaviour.

Another contributing factor seems to be that customers often abandon the shopping cart before completing a purchase, especially when purchasing edibles. The group members need to learn more about why this is happening.

Step 3: Establish Criteria

Establishing the criteria for a solution is the next step. At this point, information is coming in from diverse perspectives, and each group member has contributed information from their perspective, even though there may be several points of overlap.

Kevin: Customers who complete the postsale survey indicate that they want to know (1) what is the estimated time of delivery, (2) why a specific item was not in stock and when it will be available, and (3) why their order sometimes arrives with less than a complete order, with some items back-ordered, without prior notification.

He notes that a very small percentage of customers complete the postsale survey, and the results are far from scientific. He also notes that it appears the interface is not capable of cross-checking inventory to provide immediate information concerning back orders, so that the customer “buys it” only to learn several days later that it was not in stock. This seems to be especially problematic for edible products, because people may tend to order them for special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries. But we don’t really know this for sure because of the low participation in the postsale survey.

Mariah: There are four edible products that frequently sell out. So far, we haven’t been able to boost the appeal of other edibles so that people would order them as a second choice when these sales leaders aren’t available. We also have several rare, exotic products that are slow movers. They have potential, but currently are underperformers.

Suri: We know from a postal code analysis that most of our customers are from a few specific geographic areas associated with above-average incomes. We have very few credit cards declined, and the average sale is over $100. Shipping costs represent on average 8 percent of the total sales cost. We do not have sufficient information to produce a customer profile. There is no specific point in the purchase process where basket abandonment tends to happen; it happens fairly uniformly at all steps.

Step 4: Consider Possible Solutions to the Problem

The group has listened to each other and now starts to brainstorm ways to address the challenges they have addressed while focusing resources on those solutions that are more likely to produce results.

Kevin: Is it possible for our programmers to create a cross-index feature, linking the product desired with a report of how many are in stock? I’d like the customer to know right away whether it is in stock, or how long they may have to wait. As another idea, is it possible to add incentives to the purchase cycle that won’t negatively impact our overall profit? I’m thinking a small volume discount on multiple items, or perhaps free shipping over a specific dollar amount.

Mariah: I recommend we hold a focus group where customers can sample our edible products and tell us what they like best and why. When the best sellers are sold out, could we offer a discount on related products to provide an instant alternative? We might also cull the underperforming products with a liquidation sale to generate interest.

Suri: If we want to know more about our customers, we need to give them an incentive to complete the post-sale survey. How about a 5 percent off coupon code for the next purchase to get them to return and to help us better identify our customer base? We may also want to build in a customer referral rewards program, but it all takes better data in to get results out. We should also explore the supply side of the business by getting a more reliable supply of the leading products and trying to get discounts that are more advantageous from our suppliers, especially in the edible category.

Step 5: Decide on a Solution

Kevin, Mariah, and Suri may want to implement all the solution strategies, but they do not have the resources to do them all. They'll complete a cost-benefit analysis, which ranks each solution according to its probable impact.

Step 6: Implement the Solution

Kevin: is faced with the challenge of designing the computer interface without incurring unacceptable costs. He strongly believes that the interface will pay for itself within the first year—or, to put it more bluntly, that *Favourites*' declining sales will get worse if the website does not have this feature soon. He asks to meet with top management to get budget approval and secures their agreement, on one condition: he must negotiate a compensation schedule with the information technology consultants that includes delayed compensation in the form of bonuses after the feature has been up and running successfully for six months.

Mariah: knows that searching for alternative products is a never-ending process, but it takes time and the company needs results. She decides to invest time evaluating products that competing companies currently offer, especially in the edible category, on the theory that customers who find their desired items sold out on the *Favourites* website may have been buying alternative products elsewhere instead of choosing an alternative from *Favourites*' product lines.

Suri: decides to approach the vendors of the four frequently sold-out products and ask point blank, "What would it take to get you to produce these items more reliably in greater quantities?" By opening the channel of communication with these vendors, she is able to motivate them to make modifications that will improve the reliability and quantity. She also approaches the vendors of the less popular products with a request for better discounts in return for their cooperation in developing and test-marketing new products.

Step 7: Follow Up on the Solution

Kevin: After several beta tests, the cross-index feature was implemented and has been in place for thirty days. Now customers see either "in stock" or "available [mo/da/yr]" in the shopping basket. As expected, Kevin notes a decrease in the number of chat and phone inquiries to the effect of, "Will this item arrive before my wife's birthday?" However, he notes an increase in inquiries asking, "Why isn't this item in stock?" It is difficult to tell whether customer satisfaction is higher overall.

Mariah: In exploring the merchandise available from competing merchants, she got several ideas for modifying *Favourites*' product line to offer more flavors and other variations on popular edibles. Working with vendors, she found that these modifications cost very little. Within the first thirty days of adding these items to the product line, sales are up. Mariah believes these additions also serve to enhance the *Favourites* brand identity, but she has no data to back this up.

Suri: So far, the vendors supplying the four top-selling edibles have fulfilled their promise of increasing quantity and reliability. However, three of the four items have still sold out, raising the question of whether *Favourites* needs to bring in one or more additional vendors to produce these items. Of the vendors with which Favourites asked to negotiate better discounts, some refused, and two of these were "stolen" by a competing merchant so that they no longer sell to *Favourites*. In addition, one of the vendors that agreed to give a better discount was unexpectedly forced to cease operations for several weeks because of a fire.

This scenario allows us to see that the problem may have several dimensions as well as solutions, that resources can be limited, and not every solution is successful. Even though the problem is not immediately resolved, the group problem-solving pattern and communication among the group members serves as a useful guide through the problem-solving process.

7.4 Teamwork and Leadership

Two important aspects of group communication—especially in the business environment—are teamwork and leadership. You will work in a team and at some point may be called upon to lead. You may emerge in that role as the group recognizes your specific skill set in relation to the task, you may be appointed to a position of responsibility for yourself and others, or you may volunteer to lead a team. Your communication skills will be your foundation for success as a member and as a leader. Listen and seek to understand both the task and your group members as you become involved with the new effort. Have confidence in yourself and inspire the trust of others. Know that leading and following are both integral aspects of effective teamwork.

"Teamwork" by Geralt, Pixabay License

Teamwork

Teams are a form of group normally dedicated to production or problem solving. Like groups, teams can often achieve higher levels of performance than individuals because of the combined energies and talents of the members. Collaboration can increase motivation and creativity. Individuals have a sense of belonging to the group, and the range of views and diversity can energize the process, helping address creative blocks and stalemates. By involving members of the team in decision-making, and calling upon each member's area of expertise, teamwork can result in better problem solving that leads to greater innovation, improved quality, and increased success.

Teamwork is not without its challenges. The work itself may prove a challenge as members juggle competing assignments and personal commitments. The work may also be compromised if team members are expected to conform and pressured to go along with a procedure, plan, or product that they themselves have not developed. **Groupthink**, or the tendency to accept the group's ideas and actions in spite of individual concerns, can also compromise the process and reduce efficiency. Personalities and competition can play a role in a team's failure to produce.

We can recognize that people want to belong to a successful team, and celebrating incremental gain can focus the attention on the project and its goals. Members will be more willing to express thoughts and opinions, and follow through with actions, when they perceive that they are an important part of the team. By failing to include all team members, valuable insights may be lost in the rush to judgment or production. It is crucial to make time for planning, and to allow each member time to study, reflect, and contribute; by so doing, team members can gain valuable insights from each other, and may be more likely to contribute information that challenges the status quo. Unconventional or "devil's advocate" thinking may prove insightful and serve to challenge the process in a positive way, improving the production of the team. Respect for divergent views can encourage open discussion.

John Thill and Courtland Bovee (2002) provide a valuable list to consider when setting up a team as follows:

- Select team members wisely
- Select a responsible leader
- Promote cooperation
- Clarify goals
- Elicit commitment
- Clarify responsibilities
- Instill prompt action
- Apply technology
- Ensure technological compatibility
- Provide prompt feedback

Group dynamics involve the interactions and processes of a team and influence the degree to which members feel a part of the goal and mission. A team with a strong identity can prove to be a powerful force, but it requires time and commitment. A team that exerts too much control over individual members can run the risk of reducing creative interactions and encourage tunnel vision. A team that exerts too little control, with attention to process and areas of specific responsibility, may not be productive. Team members represent diverse viewpoints and approaches to the problem making it challenging to find the balance between motivation and encouragement, and control and influence. A skilled business communicator creates a positive team by first selecting members based on their areas of skill and expertise, but attention to their style of communication is also important. Individuals that typically work alone or tend to be introverted may need additional encouragement to participate. Extroverts may need to be encouraged to listen to others and not dominate the conversation.

Leadership

Leadership is one of the most studied aspects of group communication. Scholars in business, communication, psychology, and many other fields have written extensively about the qualities of leaders, theories of leadership, and how to build leadership skills. It's important to point out that, although a group may have only one official leader, other group members play important leadership roles. Making this distinction also helps us differentiate between leaders and leadership (Hargie, 2011). The leader is a group role that may be associated with a high-status position and may be formally or informally recognized by group members. In other instances, leaders emerge from within the group, and have no official title, role, or formal authority. **Leadership** is a complex of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviours that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its task. A person in the role of leader may provide no or poor leadership. Likewise, a person who is not recognized as a "leader" by title or formal position, can provide excellent leadership.

Quick Quiz

Navigate to the following quick quiz: What's Your Leadership Style?

Leadership Styles

Given the large amount of research done on leadership, it is not surprising that there are several different ways to define or categorize leadership styles. In general, effective leaders do not fit solely into one style in any of the following classifications. Instead, they are able to adapt their leadership style to fit the relational and situational context (Wood, 1977).

Read and review the following article from MindTools that describes a variety of leadership style models: Leadership styles: Choosing the right approach for the situation.

One common way to study leadership style is to make a distinction among autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leaders (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). These leadership styles can be described as follows:

- **Autocratic leaders** set policies and make decisions primarily on their own, taking advantage of the power present in their title or status to set the agenda for the group.
- **Democratic leaders** facilitate group discussion and like to take input from all members before making a decision.
- **Laissez-faire leaders** take a "hands-off" approach, preferring to give group members freedom to reach and implement their own decisions.

More recently, Copeland (2016) found values-based leadership styles to be most effective, namely authentic, ethical, and transformational leadership styles (p. 79). These three styles of leadership all involve some level of risk pertaining to vulnerability.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability research was popularized by Dr. Brené Brown through her years of research on shame. Utilizing vulnerability on a day-to-day basis can "demonstrate transparency and an openness to emotional exposure" (Lopez, 2018, ix). This section considers vulnerability and it's relationship to trust, courage, and self-awareness (all three important to leadership), as well as three more contemporary leadership styles: authentic, ethical, and transformational.

Vulnerability is "the emotion we experience during times of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure" (Brown, 2018, p. 19); strong leaders expose themselves emotionally as they negotiate risk and uncertainty in our current global environment and its ever-increasing rate of change. "When a leader embraces failure and shares vulnerability with humility, followers are able to connect with the leader at an emotional level and are more likely to share feelings of vulnerability themselves" (Ito & Bligh, 2017, p. 67).

Some examples of actions that a vulnerable leader might take include reaching out to an employee with an ill child or family member, checking in with a coworker who experienced a recent loss, or taking responsibility for a mistake at work (Seppälä, 2014). "Collaboration, then, as a way to be morally accountable, requires a deep understanding of vulnerability: the generosity, humility, and patience needed to work through conflicts, misunderstandings, and miscommunications" (Pignatelli, 2011, p. 223).

Vulnerability directly involves the issue of trust (Brown, 2012a). Leaders "must be truthful and consistent in their behavior and must not arbitrarily disregard employees' suggestions and opinions on a regular basis" (Thrash, 2012, p. 4). The best place to work "is one where employees trust the people they work with, have pride in the work they do, and enjoy the people they work with" (Bush & Lewis-Kulin, 2018). Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin (2006) explain that "successful leaders are authentic and behave with consistency, can read the emotions of others, and attend to the emotional aspects of the organization" (as cited in Seefeld, 2016, p. 36).

Sané Bell wrote: "when I lack self-awareness as a leader and when I'm not connected with the intentions driving my thoughts, feelings, and actions, I limit the perspective and insights that I can share with the people I lead" (Brown, 2018, p. 179). "When leaders engage in reflective practices, their own goals and performance are likely to thrive" (Seefeld, 2016, p. 54). Sedikides, Slabu, Lenton, & Thomaes define authenticity as the "sense or feeling that one is in alignment with one's true or genuine self" (as cited in Oc et al., 2020, p. 1).

"How much we know ourselves is extremely important, but how we treat ourselves is the most important" (Brown, 2012). As we grow up, "we experience pain, and shame, and struggle with worthiness, we shut down parts of ourselves. And we shut down those things that make us vulnerable" (Brown, 2012). "If I have never expected my closest family members to emotionally support or connect with me, then I am unfamiliar with the experience of being emotionally vulnerable; being encouraged to do so would likely feel prohibitive and foreign" (Chenfeng et al., 2016, p. 562). "When individuals feel less vulnerable or more secure in their relationships with others, they are more likely to let others see them for who they really are" (Oc et al., 2020, p. 4).

Wallace and Tice (2012) note that an individual's desire to be socially accepted can affect whether they act authentically (Oc et al., 2020). Individuals often show an inauthentic version of themselves at work and may opt to do so because they feel vulnerable (as cited in Oc et al., 2020, p. 3). "At the same time, our capacity and need to take an action and demonstrate initiative speaks, equally, to our vulnerability and fragility, to the very real risk of inflicting both intended and unintended pain" (Pignatelli, 2011, p. 225).

Vulnerability and Gender/Identity

Fletcher (2004) reflects that traditional leadership characteristics tend to be masculine "such as individualism, control, assertiveness, and skills of advocacy and domination" while more modern characteristics are considered feminine "such as empathy, community, vulnerability, and skills of inquiry and collaboration" (p. 650). While people may instinctively think of the masculine traits when describing a leader, an effective leader needs to have an "androgynous combination of feminine and masculine traits" (Hoyt, 2010, p. 486).

When discussing the myth of vulnerability as a weakness and that people don't "do vulnerability," Brown (2012a) notes that statement is "normally followed up by a gender comment or a professional comment" such as "I don't do vulnerability, I'm a dude". "Encouraging leader humility in the workplace may not be an easy task given that many organizational leaders fear that expressing humility demonstrates a lack of competence to others" (Oc et al., 2020, p. 21).

"Despite being underrepresented, women are perceived to have more desirable leadership qualities than men" (Seefeld, 2016, p. 41). Schreiber (2002) notes that "women continue to have perceptions about their position(s) in higher education, embracing a collaborative leadership style that can be misunderstood or disrespected, and at times, feeling out of sync with some male-dominated administrations" (as cited in Seefeld, 2016, p. 100).

Even more underrepresented are individuals who identify as non-binary (male or female). It is helpful that there is information that addresses an "androgynous combination of feminine and masculine traits" (Hoyt, 2010, p. 486), however, it is important to remember that these findings are not inclusive of all organizational members, and that leaders need to update their own knowledge base as new research becomes available.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=280#oembed-1

Video: "The power of vulnerability" by Brené Brown [20:49](Transcript Available).

Ethical Leadership

Brown et al. (2005) define ethical leadership as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (p. 120). Kaptein (2019) adds that an ethical leader is not just a moral person and manager but also a "moral entrepreneur who creates new norms" (p. 1136). This entrepreneurship should lead to the "development of both society and the trust of stakeholders" (Kaptein, 2019, p. 1136). Brown and Treviño (2014) find that "leaders who have had ethical role models are more likely to become ethical leaders" (Kaptein, 2019, p. 1135).

A leader needs to be "perceived as attractive, credible, and legitimate" in order to be an effective and influential ethical leader (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). Kalshoven et al. (2011) also find that ethical leaders tend to be agreeable and conscientious (Kaptein, 2019). Brown et al. (2005) studied how MBA students described a leader they perceived as ethical. The results included a leader who listens, keeps their followers' best interests in mind, is a role model when it comes to ethics, applies discipline when ethics are violated, makes fair decisions, and can be trusted (Kaptein, 2019).

Kaptein (2019) argues that ethical leadership is even an important part of transformational and authentic leadership "because ethics lies at the heart of leadership" (p. 1136).

Transformational Leadership

Bass and Riggio (2006) describe transformational leadership as "motivating others through a common mission or challenge that empowers followers and encourages them to develop as leaders" (p. 3). Transformational leaders tend to have more satisfied, committed followers with elevated work performances (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This style of leadership addresses "the follower's sense of self-worth" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 4). Carleton, Barling, and Trivisonno (2018) also found a strong connection between a leader's trait mindfulness and their positive actions as a transformational leader.

The components of transformational leadership include idealized influence (acting as a strong role model), inspirational motivation (motivating others through a shared vision or common goal), intellectual stimulation (encouraging followers to find creative and innovative solutions), and individualized consideration (paying attention to each follower's needs and adjusting mentoring strategies to fit those needs) (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Individualized consideration is most important when it comes to vulnerability as it "involves leaders creating relationships with followers that demonstrate care and attention with follower's needs and emotions" (Simonis, 2015, p. 7). A leader who applies individualized consideration tends to build relationships with a greater level of trust (Simonis, 2015).

A concern regarding transformational leadership is that a leader could lead their followers astray with "destructive" and "selfish" motivations, making a leader's authenticity vital in a successful relationship (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 4).

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership has been described as "the process whereby leaders are aware of their thoughts and behaviors within the context in which they operate" (Maximo et al., 2019, p. 2). Walumbwa et al. (2008) outline the components of authentic leadership as self-awareness (a leader's understanding of themselves including strengths and weaknesses), balanced processing (a leader's ability to make objective decisions after weighing all the evidence), and relational transparency (a leader's strength in communicating honest and genuine information as well as opinions) (Maximo et al., 2019, p. 2).

Michie and Gooty (2005) noted that emotions directed toward others motivate authentic leaders "to behave in ways that reflect self-transcendent values" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 318). For example, gratitude and appreciation (other-directed emotions) would be motivators for an authentic leader to model values of honesty and loyalty (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 318).

Authentic leaders have a significant impact on their organization and their followers (Maximo et al., 2019); thus, authentic leadership should also focus on the relationship between the leader and the follower (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic followers are likely to display the same behaviors and traits described above, paralleling those exhibited by their authentic leader (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Followers may also show "increased levels of trust and a stronger willingness to cooperate" (Maximo et al., 2019, p. 3).

As with any relationship based on trust, both parties take a risk in being vulnerable (Maximo et al,. 2019). Detert and Burris (2007) find that employees or followers may not take the risk "if they perceive these risks to result in negative consequences" or if they cause embarrassment (Maximo, et al., 2019, p. 3).

7.5 Conflict in the Work Environment

The word "conflict" produces a sense of anxiety for many people, but it is part of the human experience. Just because conflict is universal does not mean that we cannot improve how we handle disagreements, misunderstandings, and struggles to understand or make ourselves understood.

Conflict is the physical or psychological struggle associated with the perception of opposing or incompatible goals, desires, demands, wants, or needs (McLean, 2005). When incompatible goals, scarce resources, or interference are present, conflict is a typical result, but it doesn't mean the relationship is poor or failing. All relationships progress through times of conflict and collaboration. How we navigate and negotiate these challenges influences, reinforces, or destroys the relationship. Conflict is universal, but how and when it occurs is open to influence and interpretation, as is the perception of whether conflict is good or bad. Rather than viewing conflict from a negative frame of reference, view it as an opportunity for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship.

Conflict Management Strategies

As individuals, we can acknowledge and anticipate that conflict will be present in every context or environment where communication occurs. To that end, we can predict, anticipate, and formulate strategies to address conflict successfully. How you choose to approach conflict influences its resolution. Joseph DeVito (2003) offers several conflict management strategies that you might adapt and expand for your use.

Avoidance

You may choose to change the subject, leave the room, or not even enter the room in the first place, but the conflict will remain and may resurface when you least expect it. Your reluctance to address the conflict directly is a normal response, and one which many cultures practice. In cultures where independence is highly valued, direct confrontation is more common. In cultures where the community is emphasized over the individual, indirect strategies may be more common. Avoidance allows for more time to resolve the problem, but can also increase the problems or costs associated with problem. It is always wise to consider the perspective of others, and allow time to explore alternatives, but it is important to address the situation and do your best to solve the conflict.

Defensiveness versus Supportiveness

Defensive communication is characterized by control, evaluation, and judgments, while **supportive communication** focuses on the points and not personalities. When we feel judged or criticized, our ability to listen can be diminished, and we may only hear the negative message. By choosing to focus on the message instead of the messenger, we keep the discussion supportive and professional.

Face-Detracting and Face-Saving

Communication is not competition. Communication is the sharing of understanding and meaning, but does everyone always share equally? People struggle for control, limit access to resources and information as part of territorial displays, and otherwise use the process of communication to engage in competition. People also use communication for collaboration. Both competition and collaboration can be observed in communication interactions, but there are two concepts central to both: face-detracting and face-saving strategies.

Face-detracting strategies involve messages or statements that take away from the respect, integrity, or credibility of a person. **Face-saving strategies** protect credibility and separate message from messenger. For example, you might say that "sales were down this quarter," without specifically noting who was responsible. Sales were simply down. If, however, you ask, "How does the sales manager explain the decline in sales?" you have specifically connected an individual with the negative news. While we may want to specifically connect tasks and job responsibilities to individuals and departments, in terms of language each strategy has distinct results.

Face-detracting strategies often produce a defensive communication climate, inhibit listening, and allow for little room for collaboration. To save-face is to raise the issue while preserving a supportive climate, allowing room in the conversation for constructive discussions and problem solving. By using a face-saving strategy to shift the emphasis from the individual to the issue, we avoid power struggles and personalities, providing each other space to save-face (Donohue & Klot, 1992).

In collectivist cultures, where the community's well-being is promoted or valued above that of the individual, face-saving strategies are common communication strategies. In Japan, for example, to confront someone directly is perceived as humiliation, a great insult. In the United States, greater emphasis is placed on individual performance, and responsibility may be more directly assessed. If our goal is to solve a problem, and preserve the relationship, then consideration of a face-saving strategy should be one option a skilled business communicator considers when addressing negative news or information.

Empathy

Communication involves not only the words we write or speak, but how and when we write or say them. The way we communicate also carries meaning, and empathy for the individual is an important aspect of our interactions. Empathic listening involves listening to both the literal and implied meanings within a message. By paying attention to feelings and emotions associated with content and information, we can build relationships and address conflict more constructively. In management, negotiating conflict is a common task and empathy is one strategy to consider when attempting to resolve issues.

Watch this short video by Brené Brown on empathy:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=241#oembed-1

Video: Brené Brown on Empathy by Brené Brown [2:53] Transcript available

Managing Your Emotions

There will be times in the work environment when emotions run high. Your awareness of them can help you clear your mind and choose to wait until the moment has passed to tackle the challenge.

Emotions can be contagious in the workplace, and fear of the unknown can influence people to act in irrational ways. The wise business communicator can recognize when emotions are on edge in themselves or others, and choose to wait to communicate, problem-solve, or negotiate until after the moment has passed.

Evaluations and Criticism in the Workplace

There may come a time when a performance evaluation includes criticism. Knowing how to approach this criticism can give you peace of mind to listen clearly, separating subjective, personal attacks from objective, constructive requests for improvement. Guffey (2007) offers us seven strategies for giving and receiving evaluations and criticism in the workplace that we have adapted here.

Listen without Interrupting

If you are on the receiving end of feedback, start by listening without interruption. Interruptions can be internal and external, and warrant further discussion. If your supervisor starts to discuss a point and you immediately start debating the point in your mind, you are paying attention to yourself and what you think they said or are going to say, and not that which is actually communicated. Let them speak while you listen, and if you need to take notes to focus your thoughts, take clear notes of what is said, also noting points to revisit later.

Determine the Speaker's Intent

We have discussed previews as a normal part of conversation, and in this context they play an important role. People want to know what is coming and generally dislike surprises. If you are on the receiving end of feedback, you may need to ask a clarifying question if it doesn't count as an interruption. You may also need to take notes and write down questions that come to mind that you can address when it is your turn to speak. As a manager, be clear and positive in your opening and lead with praise. You can find one positive point to highlight, even if it is only that the employee consistently shows up to work on time, before transitioning to a performance issue.

Indicate You Are Listening

In many Western cultures, eye contact is a signal that you are listening and paying attention to the person speaking. Take notes, nod your head, or lean forward to display interest and listening. Regardless of whether you are the employee receiving the criticism or the supervisor delivering it, displaying listening behaviour engenders a positive climate that helps mitigate the challenge of negative news or constructive criticism.

Paraphrase

Restate the main points to paraphrase what has been discussed. This verbal display allows for clarification and acknowledges receipt of the message.

If you are the employee, summarize the main points and consider steps you will take to correct the situation. If none come to mind or you are nervous and having difficulty thinking clearly, state out loud the main point and ask if you can provide solution steps and strategies at a later date. You can request a follow-up meeting if appropriate, or indicate you will respond in writing via email to provide the additional information.

If You Agree

If an apology is well deserved, offer it. Communicate clearly what will change or indicate when you will respond with specific strategies to address the concern. As a manager you will want to formulate a plan that addresses the issue and outlines responsibilities as well as time frames for corrective action. As an employee you will want specific steps you can both agree on that will serve to solve the problem. Clear communication and acceptance of responsibility demonstrates maturity and respect.

If You Disagree

If you disagree, focus on the points or issue and not personalities. Do not bring up past issues and keep the conversation focused on the task at hand. Now that you better understand their position, you may want to suggest a follow-up meeting to give you time to reflect on the issues. You may also want to consider involving a third party, investigating to learn more about the issue, or taking time to cool off.

Do not respond in anger or frustration; instead, always display professionalism. If the criticism is unwarranted, recognize that the information they have may be flawed or biased, and consider ways to learn more about the case to share with them, searching for a mutually beneficial solution.

If other strategies to resolve the conflict fail, consider contacting your human resources department to learn more about due process procedures at your workplace. Display respect and never say anything that would reflect poorly on yourself or your organization. Words spoken in anger can have a lasting impact and are impossible to retrieve or take back.

Learn from Experience

Every communication interaction provides an opportunity for learning if you choose to see it that way. Sometimes the lessons are situational and may not apply in future contexts. Other times the lessons learned may well serve you across your professional career. Taking notes for yourself to clarify your thoughts, much like a journal, serve to document and help you see the situation more clearly.

Recognize that some aspects of communication are intentional, and may communicate meaning, even if it is hard to understand. Also, know that some aspects of communication are unintentional, and may not imply meaning or design. People make mistakes. They say things they should not have said. Emotions are revealed that are not always rational, and not always associated with the current context. A challenging morning at home can spill over into the work day and someone's bad mood may have nothing to do with you.

In summary, conflict is unavoidable and can be an opportunity for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship. Try to distinguish between what you can control and what you cannot, and always choose professionalism, especially in crucial conversations.

7.6 Conflict Management in Today's Global Society

Conflict Resolution Assessment

Take the Assessment: Conflict Management Styles Assessment

There are five types of conflict styles: avoidance, accommodation, collaboration, competition, and compromise. Each of us has a conflict style that pairs with our personality and our values, beliefs, and experiences. It is possible to have more than one style and the difference of where those styles are more viable can depend on the environment of the conflict.

Example: At work, Susan supervises 3 employees. If there is any disagreement, conflicts, or issues within the team- Susan will work with each individual to address it. At home, when Susan experiences conflict with her mom, Susan will avoid addressing any issue or disagreement.

Let's review the different types of conflict strategies and then discuss why Susan responds differently in her work at home life.

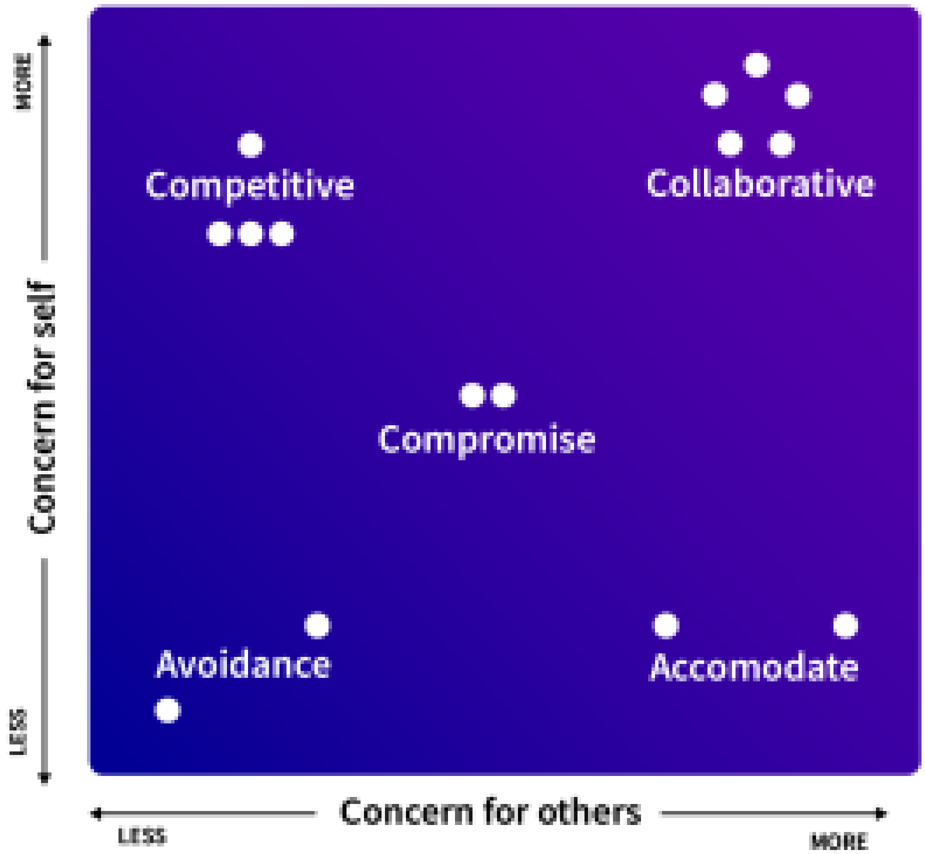

Figure 7.3: "Conflict Management Styles" by Fanshawe College, [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0]

The graph above shows how higher/lower concern for self and others affects how we manage conflict. High concern for self may include our desire to control others whereas, low concern for self, sees one hiding from the conflict altogether. With high concern for others, one may seek to work together, or with low concern for others seek to give in to demands or needs. Compromise occupies a middle ground, where many may feel they did not get everything they wanted or needed.

Avoidance: "Conflict? What Conflict?"

Strategies of this style include denial, ignoring, and withdrawing. With limited concern for yourself and sometimes others, an individual with this style will avoid addressing any conflicts or issues. One is not committed to standing their ground or that of others. In this case, the person does not feel they get what they want or need and others feel the same.

This is seen as a lose-lose approach where both sides never manage or address what causes their conflict. Both may feel unfulfilled or ignored.

When used: When the issue is trivial, outcomes are not necessary.

When not used: When negative feelings may linger, you care about the issue.

Competition: "My way is the only way."

In contrast to "avoidance," a competitive style wants to win at any cost with the competitive style. Strategies of this style would include controlling, arguing, outsmarting, and contending. One has high concern for self and little to no concern for others. This style may have one seen as demanding or selfish. Making a stance, when needed, may be warranted; however, if this is a common conflict style, others will feel they are being bullied. This is seen as a win-lose approach to conflict. With this approach, one wins- usually at the expense of the other person. This has the loser feeling short-changed or that needs are being ignored.

When used: Others do not care about what happens.

When not used: Cooperation from others is important, self-respect from others is diminished needlessly.

Accommodation: "Whatever you want is okay with me."

Strategies to this style include appeasement, agreement, and flattery. Those with accommodation conflict styles have a higher concern for others and less of self. Here, they give into other's needs and demands and sacrifice their own needs. If chronically using this form of conflict management, others may take advantage of this person. Accommodating individuals will feel they are being taken advantage of and never have their own needs fulfilled.

When used: Issue is not important, realize you are wrong, attempt to "take turns."

When not used: Likely to resent it, used habitually to gain acceptance.

Collaboration: "Let's solve this problem together!"

With this type of conflict style, individuals come up with a variety of solutions and the one was chosen is one favoured by both. Strategies for this style would include gathering information, looking for other options, conversation, and agreeing to disagree. Referring back to the restaurant scenario, in this style, individuals choose a restaurant both accept. For example, Jane and Thomas are going out for lunch. Jane, a semi-vegetarian, wants seafood and Thomas, a die hard red meat eater, is craving steak. To collaborate, the two throw out other options and decide to go to an Italian restaurant, instead. Both love Italian food and are happy to give up their initial choice. This win-win approach makes both feel a balanced solution was reached for both sides to feel satisfied.

When used: The issues and/or the relationship are both significant, both want to address all concerns.

When not used: Time and resources are limited, issues are unimportant

Compromise: "Meet me in the middle."

Strategies for this style of conflict include reducing expectations, negotiating, a little something for all involved. Compromise is keeping others and ones' own needs into consideration. This may have you give up what you want today-in exchange for another day. Each works for success and happiness. This type is great if used over time and works well with long-term relationships. A good example is two friends agreeing to go to the other's choice for lunch and the next time going to the second person's choice. Both get what they want; but, must wait until it is their turn.

When used: Finding a resolution is better than nothing, cooperation is more important but resources are limited.

When not used: You can not live with the consequences.

Triggers and Self-monitoring Enhancement

Unfortunately, none of us have Super Hero powers. We are all simply human. We may stumble on triggers that make us more susceptible to managing conflict in a reactive or negative manner. Knowing your triggers can help reduce bad conflict and redirect to simple good conflict. Below are examples of common triggers that make us more vulnerable to poor conflict outcomes.

1. *Lack of sleep.* When functioning on limited sleep, we become more irritable and likely to over-react to situations.
2. *Low blood sugar or lack of food.* Because our blood sugar levels are lower, our bodies are having to work harder to maintain systems.
3. *Too hot/cold temperatures.* Yes, environment plays a major role in our behaviour. Some may experience irritable states when they become too warm or cold. This also includes other sensory triggers: too much noise, overwhelming smells, too many people around, etc.
4. *Limited information* or not being able to understand information. Perhaps not understanding the vocabulary being used or the accent of the person makes you uncomfortable and more irritable.
5. *High face-saving.* Some cultures see their public image as very important. If they feel disgraced or embarrassed they may become irate.

Understanding your triggers helps monitor yourself/actions in conflict situations and can enhance your reactions in a positive manner. By framing your conflict in a positive direction, knowing when you are emotional, what your triggers are (what sets you off), and seeking out proactive solutions, you can know how to handle conflict.

> Think about your pet-peeves, your preferred study environments, how you like to fall asleep at night, the condition you keep your room in, your unconscious mannerisms, etc. Have you shared these things with your roommate? If you do not live with another person, maybe it can relate to your work environment or a study group. If you know your triggers and how you typically respond to these triggers, be proactive in addressing these with your roommate, partner, teammates, and etc.

The PIN Model of Conflict

Adapted from training materials by Derek Emerson, Hope College, 1994.

In conflicts, each person (or group) involved has a PIN: a position, an interest, and a need. PINs often help those working to find a resolution to the conflict because PINs develop into communication channels when determining the similarities and differences between the parties. Being aware of your own PINs and paying attention to the PIN of whom your conflict is with can be helpful.

- *Positions.* What we state we want
- *Interests.* What we really want
- *Needs.* What we must have

Strategies for Handling and Preventing Conflict

There are a variety of approaches or styles to managing conflict, especially when emotionally charged, that individuals may use (Blake & Mouton, 1994). Culture, or an individual's upbringing, usually reflects how one manages such conflict (Croucher et al, 2012). Knowing how to identify your own conflict styles, needs, and the needs of others will help you to develop better, more rewarding outcomes, and to demonstrate a more ethical perspective.

Our social norms and rituals may create expectations that trigger conflict. Norms are expected behaviours we abide by within groups. These may include our dress, interaction with authorities and elders, social roles (feminine/masculine, parent/child, leader/follower), and verbal/nonverbal communication. By being too loud at a restaurant, disclosing too much personal information, or questioning authority, one might trigger conflict.

Emotions and Our Developing Brain

Though often overlooked, when discussing conflict, extreme reactions of emotional response can be profound, and cause individuals who have not learned to manage conflict proactively and productively to react in a destructive manner (Lindner, 2009). The brain is hardwired to react to conflict. This includes emotional processing through six brain structures (amygdala, basal, ganglia, left prefrontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex, and orbital frontal cortex). Our brains help us regulate our emotions. As we grow and mature, our brains are better able to reason, drawing more on logic than responding to emotion. This allows us to better understand social norms expected for an adult and to manage conflict more appropriately. Delayed biological development, brain injury, and social environmental factors may lead to less favourable management of conflict (Lindner, 2009). Learning to proactively manage conflict re-enforces successful conflict management, ethical behaviour, and/or collaboration, which in turn can help us feel more at peace.

Conflict management is a uniquely communication-oriented skill, and it is likely that before this class you had not been exposed to the many ways we can understand and resolve conflict in our relationships. Successfully completing a college degree includes how well you manage conflict with your classmates, teachers, family and friends back home, and many other relationships.

It is important to recognize the types of conflicts we encounter on a daily basis, as well as the various strategies or styles for approaching conflict situations. Employers are increasingly seeking applicants who can demonstrate emotional intelligence, which includes an acumen for managing conflict effectively in professional settings. Additionally, it is important to appreciate the positive or generative possibilities of conflict. If you think about out it, some of the best ideas produced by a culture may be forged out of conflict situations. If we commit to conflict management as a life-long learning experience, rather than something to fear, then our personal, professional, and public lives will benefit greatly.

7.7 Crucial Conversations

While the process may be the same, high-stakes communications require more planning, reflection, and skill than normal day-to-day interactions at work. Examples of high-stakes communication events include asking for a raise or presenting a business plan to a venture capitalist. In addition to these events, there are also many times in our professional lives when we have crucial conversations — discussions where not only the stakes are high but also where opinions vary and emotions run strong (Patterson, et. al., 2002). One of the most consistent recommendations from communications experts is to work toward using "and" instead of "but" as you communicate under these circumstances. In addition, be aware of your communication style and practice flexibility; it is under stressful situations that communication styles can become the most rigid.

7.8 Conclusion

Reflection Activity

Returning to Abe's story from the beginning of this chapter, as a leader on the technology side of her team's work, how might she share what she knows without overwhelming other team members? What type of leadership style would help Abe have a positive impact on her team's success implementing the new software required for Financial Analysts?

Quick Quiz

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An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=282#h5p-51

Glossary

Adjourning stage – members leave the group.

Autocratic leaders – set policies and make decisions primarily on their own, taking advantage of the power present in their title or status to set the agenda for the group.

Blocker – blocks attempts at consensus consistently.

Coordinator – brings ideas, information, and suggestions together.

Defensive Communication – communication characterized by control, evaluation, and judgments.

Democratic leaders – facilitate group discussion and like to take input from all members before making a decision.

Dominator – dominates discussion, not allowing others to take their turn.

Elaborator – builds on ideas and provides examples.

Evaluator-critic – evaluates ideas and provides constructive criticism.

Forming stage – individual group members come to know each other.

Face-detracting strategies – communication strategies involving messages or statements that take away from the respect, integrity, or credibility of a person.

Face-saving strategies – communication strategies that protect credibility and separate message from messenger.

Group – three or more individuals who affiliate, interact, or cooperate in a familial, social, or work context.

Group communication – the exchange of information with those who are alike culturally, linguistically, and/or geographically.

Group dynamics – involve the interactions and processes of a team and influence the degree to which members feel a part of the goal and mission.

Group norms – customs, standards, and behavioural expectations that emerge as a group forms.

Groupthink – the tendency to accept the group's ideas and actions in spite of individual concerns.

Initiator-coordinator – suggests new ideas of new ways of looking at the problem.

Joker or Clown – seeks attention through humour and distracts group members.

Laissez-faire leaders – take a "hands-off" approach, preferring to give group members freedom to reach and implement their own decisions.

Leadership – a complex of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviours that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its task.

Microgroup – a small, independent group that has a link, affiliation, or association with a larger group.

Norming stage – the group establishes norms, or informal rules, for behaviour and interaction.

Orientation stage – another name for the forming stage.

Performing stage – the group accomplishes its mandate, fulfills its purpose, and reaches its goals.

Primary groups – meet most, if not all, of one's needs.

Recorder – records ideas, examples, suggestions, and critiques.

Recognition seeker – relates discussion to their accomplishments; seeks attention.

Secondary groups – often include work groups, where the goal is to complete a task or solve a problem.

Special-Interest pleader – relates discussion to special interest or personal agenda.

Storming stage – a time of struggles as group members sort out their differences.

Supportive communication – communication focused on the topic under discussion and not personalities of those involved in the discussion.

Teams – a form of a group normally dedicated to production or problem solving.

Additional Resources

National Research Council Canada. Management Competencies (including Teamwork and Communication): Behavioural Competencies

Government of Canada: Teamwork and Cooperation

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CHAPTER 8: CREATING & ORGANIZING PRESENTATIONS

Chapter Preview

8.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, learners will be able to:

- Label and discuss the three main components of the rhetorical situation.
- Identify and provide examples of at least five of the nine basic cognate strategies in communication.
- Demonstrate how to build a sample presentation by expanding on the main points you wish to convey.
- Demonstrate how to use structural parts of any presentation.
- Identify how to use different organizing principles for a presentation.

Professional Perspective

Naiomi has a big presentation coming up for a potential client in the paper industry. She wants to be certain her presentation and pitch for marketing services is built on a sound foundation of the current concerns her client may face. As you read this chapter, consider what Naiomi might do to win the client based on her presentation development.

This chapter will help you consider how to organize your information to prepare for a presentation. While knowledge of your topic is key to an effective presentation, do not underestimate the importance of a clear outline.

A presentation that flows smoothly from beginning to end is helpful both to you and to your audience. They will appreciate receiving information presented in a logical order, and you will feel less stressed if you are well organized and prepared.

A successful presentation involves organization *and* flexibility. You know your material and created an outline, however you are not going to read a script or PowerPoint presentation, nor will you memorize every single word in order (though some parts may be memorized). That said, you are not making up your speech as you go along. Your presentation is scripted in the sense that it is completely planned from start to finish, yet every word is not explicitly planned, allowing for some spontaneity and adaptation to the audience's needs in the moment.

Your outline will serve you and your audience as a guide, and help you present a more effective presentation. Just as there is no substitute for practice and preparation, there is no substitute for organization and an outline when you need it the most: in front of an audience, whether that be live or online.

8.1 Rhetorical Situation

In the classical tradition, the art of public speaking is called rhetoric; the circumstances in which you give your speech or presentation are the rhetorical situation. The audience gives you the space and time as a speaker to fulfill your role and, hopefully, their expectations. Just as a group makes a leader, an audience makes a speaker. By looking to your audience, you shift your attention from an internal focus (you) to an external (them/others) emphasis. Several of the first questions any audience member asks himself or herself are, “Why should I listen to you?” “What does what you are saying have to do with me?” and “How does this help me?” Generating interest in your speech is the first step as you guide perception through selection, organization, and interpretation of content and ways to communicate your point.

The rhetorical situation involves three elements: the set of expectations inherent in the context, audience, and the purpose of your presentation (Kostelnick & Roberts, 1998). This means you need to consider, in essence, the “who, what, where, when, why, and how” of your speech from the audience’s perspective. Figure 8.1 below demonstrates the three-part set of expectations in the rhetorical situation.

Figure 8.1 Context, Audience, and Purpose. Your presentation depends on your knowledge of these three elements of rhetoric.

Context

Your presentation is given in a space that has a connection to the rest of the world. The space you're presenting in, the time of day, and even the events going on in the world around you and your audience will affect the decisions you make in preparing for your presentation.

Audience

The receiver (i.e., listener or audience) is one of the basic components of communication. Your audience comes to you with expectations, prior knowledge, and experience. They have a wide range of characteristics like social class, gender, age, race and ethnicity, cultural background, and language that make them unique and diverse. What kind of audience will you be speaking to? What do you know about their expectations, prior knowledge or backgrounds, and how they plan to use your information? Giving attention to this aspect of the rhetorical situation will allow you to gain insight into how to craft your message before you present it.

Purpose

A presentation may be designed to inform, demonstrate, persuade, motivate, or even entertain. The purpose of your speech is central to its formation. You should be able to state your purpose in one sentence or less, much like an effective thesis statement in an essay.

8.2 Strategies for Success

Given the diverse nature of audiences, the complexity of the communication process, and the countless options and choices to make when preparing your presentation, you may feel overwhelmed. One effective way to address this is to focus on ways to reach, interact, or stimulate your audience. Charles Kostelnick and David Roberts outline several **cognate strategies**, or ways of framing, expressing, and representing a message to an audience, in *Designing Visual Language: Strategies for Professional Communicators* (1998). The word "cognate" refers to knowledge, and these strategies are techniques to impart knowledge to your audience. They help answer questions like "Does the audience understand how I'm arranging my information?" "Am I emphasizing my key points effectively?" and "How does my expression and representation of information contribute to a relationship with the audience?" They can serve you to better anticipate and meet your audience's basic needs.

Table 8.1 summarizes the nine cognate strategies in relation to Aristotle's forms of rhetorical proof; it also provides areas on which to focus your attention as you design your message.

Table 8.1

Pathos	• Tone • Emphasis • Engagement	• Expression • Relevance • Relationship
Logos	• Clarity • Conciseness • Arrangement	• Clear understanding • Key points • Order, hierarchy, placement
Ethos	• Credibility • Expectation • Reference	• Character, trust • Norms and anticipated outcomes • Sources and frames of reference

Aristotle outlined three main forms of rhetorical proof: ethos, logos, and pathos. **Ethos** involves the speaker's character and expertise. **Logos** is the logic of the speaker's presentation—something that will be greatly enhanced by a good organizational plan. Aristotle discussed **pathos** as the use of emotion as a persuasive element in the speech (Wisse, 1998), or "the arousing of emotions in the audience." If you use pathos in a strategic way, you are following Aristotle's notion of rhetorical proof as the available means of persuasion. If logic and expertise don't move the audience, a tragic picture may do so.

The cognate strategies are in many ways expressions of these three elements, but by focusing on individual characteristics, can work toward being more effective in their preparation and presentation. Many of these strategies build on basic ideas of communication, such as verbal and nonverbal delivery. By keeping that in mind, you'll be more likely to see the connections and help yourself organize your presentation effectively.

You'll want to consider the cognate strategies and how to address each area to make your speech as effective as possible, given your understanding of the rhetorical situation.

8.3 The 9 Cognate Strategies

Tone

Your choice of words, your clothing, your voice, body language, the rhythm and cadence of your speech, the use of space – these all contribute to the tone of the presentation. Tone, or the general manner of expression of the message, will contribute to the context of the presentation.

Emphasis

As the speaker, you need to consider how you place emphasis—stress, importance, or prominence—on some aspects of your speech, and how you lessen the impact of others. Emphasis as a cognate strategy asks you to consider relevance, and the degree to which your focal point of attention contributes to or detracts from your speech. You will need to consider how you link ideas through transitions, how you repeat and rephrase, and how you place your points in hierarchical order to address the strategy of emphasis in your presentation.

Engagement

Engagement is the relationship the speaker forms with the audience. Engagement strategies can include eye contact, movement within your space, audience participation, use of images and even the words you choose. To develop the relationship with the audience, you will need to consider how your words, visuals, and other relevant elements of your speech help this relationship grow.

Clarity

"Clarity strategies help the receiver (audience) to decode the message, to understand it quickly and completely, and when necessary, to react without ambivalence" (Kostelnick & Roberts, 1998). Your word choices and visual elements should be chosen carefully, and used together appropriately, to ensure you're conveying the right meaning. Remember it can be difficult to see dense graphics in a large presentation setting.

Being Concise

Being concise is part of being clear – it refers to being brief and direct in the visual and verbal delivery of your message, and avoiding unnecessary intricacy. It involves using as many words as necessary to get your message across, and no more. If you only have four or five minutes, how will you budget your time? Being economical with your time is a pragmatic approach to ensuring that your attention, and the attention of your audience, is focused on the point at hand.

Arrangement

As the speaker, you will gather and present information in some form. How that form follows the function of communicating your message involves strategically grouping information. "Arrangement means order, the organization of visual (and verbal) elements" (Kostelnick & Roberts, 1998) in ways that allow the audience to correctly interpret the structure, hierarchy, and relationships among points of focus in your presentation.

Credibility

You will naturally develop a relationship with your audience, and the need to make trust an element is key to that development. The word "credibility" comes from the word "credence," or belief. Credibility involves your qualities, capabilities, or power to elicit from the audience belief in your character. Consider persuasive strategies that will appeal to your audience, build trust, and convey your understanding of the rhetorical situation.

Expectation

Your audience will have inherent expectations of themselves and of you depending on the rhetorical situation. Expectations involve the often unstated, eager anticipation of the norms, roles and outcomes of the speaker and the speech.

Reference

No one person knows everything all the time at any given moment, and no two people have experienced life in the same way. For this reason, ensure you use references carefully. Reference involves attention to the source and way you present your information. The audience won't expect you to personally gather statistics and publish a study, but they will expect you to state where you got your information.

8.4 Purpose and Central Idea Statements

Speeches have traditionally been seen to have one of three broad purposes: to inform, to persuade, or to entertain. Presentations to entertain may also include those with goals to inspire, to amuse or to please. You could also think of these purposes as appealing to the understanding of the audience (informative), the will or action (persuasive), and the emotion or pleasure.

Now that you know your general purpose (to inform, persuade, or to entertain), you can focus on the specific purpose. A specific purpose statement builds on your general purpose (e.g. to inform) and narrows that down to exactly what you want to inform your audience about (e.g. global warming).

In writing your specific purpose statement, you will take three contributing elements (shown in Figure 8.2) that will come together to help you determine your specific purpose:

- You (your interests, your background, past jobs, experience, education, major),
- Your audience
- The context or setting.

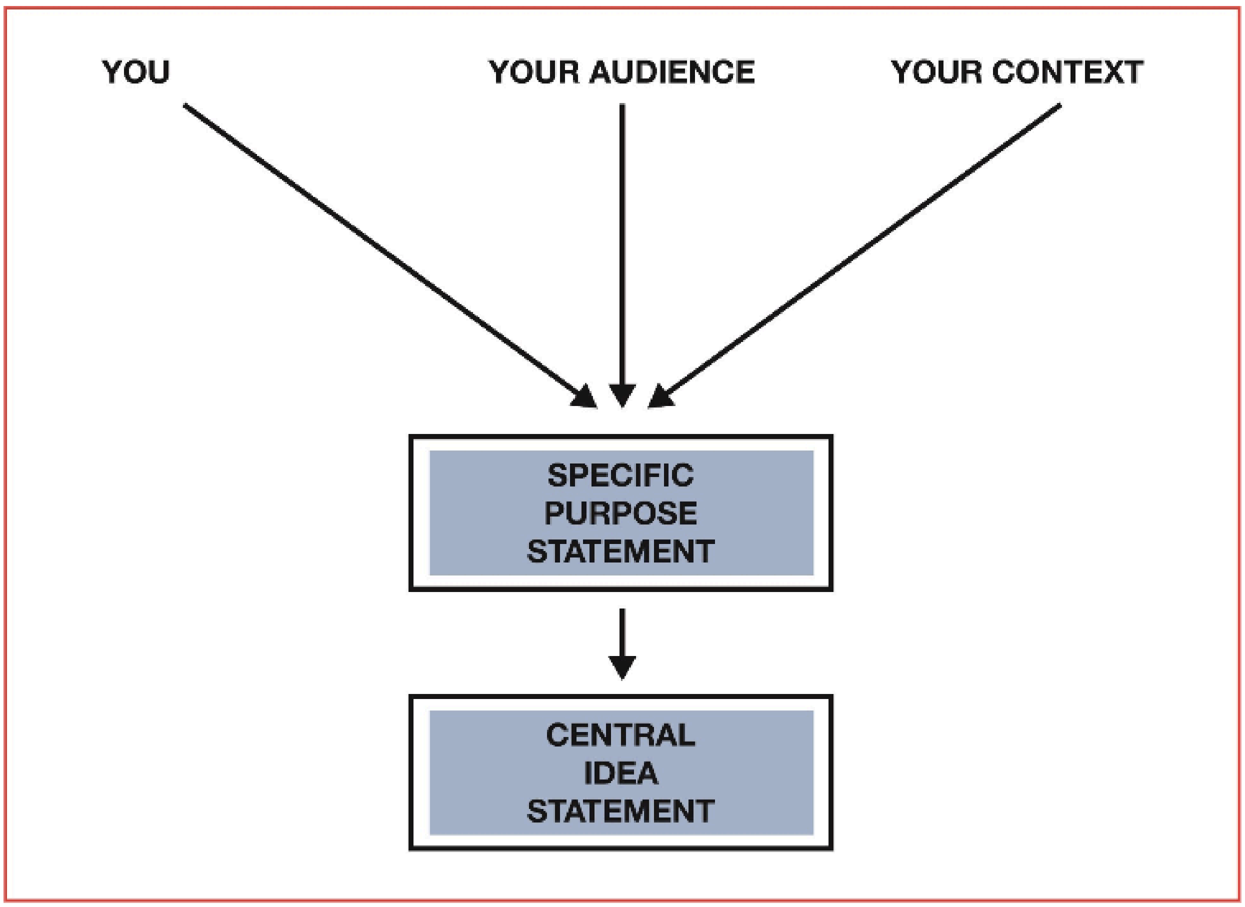


Figure 8.2. You, your audience, and your context (Tucker & Barton, 2016)

Putting It Together

Keeping these three inputs in mind, you can begin to write a specific purpose statement, which will be the foundation for everything you say in the speech, as well as a guide for what you do not say. This formula will help you in putting together your specific purpose statement:

> My purpose is to ________________ [*Choose your Specific Communication Word (inform, explain, demonstrate, describe, define, persuade, convince, prove, argue*)] an audience of _________________ [*Choose your Target Audience (my classmates, the members of the Social Work Club, my coworkers*] that/of ____________________. [The Content (how to bake brownies, Macs are better than PCs].

Example: The purpose of my presentation is to *demonstrate* for an audience of *my coworkers* that *informed intercultural communication is valuable.*

Formulating a Central Idea Statement

While you will not actually say your specific purpose statement during your speech, you will need to clearly state what your focus and main points are going to be. The statement that reveals your main points is commonly known as the central idea statement (or just the central idea). Just as you would create a thesis statement for an essay or research paper, the central idea statement helps focus your presentation by defining your topic, purpose, direction, angle and/or point of view. Here are two examples:

- *Specific Purpose* – To explain to my classmates the effects of losing a pet on the elderly.
  - *Central Idea* – When elderly persons lose their animal companions, they can experience serious psychological, emotional, and physical effects.
- *Specific Purpose* – To demonstrate to my audience the correct method for cleaning a computer keyboard.
  - *Central Idea* – Your computer keyboard needs regular cleaning to function well, and you can achieve that in four easy steps.

8.5 Research

The foundational way to offer support for the points you make in your speech is by providing evidence from other sources, which you will find by doing research.

You have access to many sources of information: books in print or electronic format, internet webpages, journal articles in databases, and information from direct, primary sources through surveys and interviews. With so many sources, information literacy is a vital skill for business professionals.

The term **"research"** is a broad one, for which the Merriam-Webster dictionary offers two basic definitions: studious inquiry or examination; especially: investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws. The more applicable meaning for this chapter is the collecting of information about a particular subject. The first definition given refers, appropriately, to primary research, which depends on primary sources.

Primary sources: information that is first-hand or straight from the source; information that is unfiltered by interpretation or editing.

Secondary sources: information that is not directly from the source; information that has been compiled, filtered, edited, or interpreted in some way.

Journalists, historians, biologists, chemists, psychologists, sociologists, and others conduct primary research, which is part of achieving a doctorate in one's field and adding to what is called "the knowledge base."

For your presentations, you might use primary sources as well. Let's say you want to do a persuasive presentation to convince the public to wear their seatbelts. Some of the basic information you might need to persuade people is: how many people in the class don't wear seatbelts regularly and why they choose not to. You could conduct primary research by creating a survey to determine if people in your town or city wear their seatbelts and, if not, why not. This would be give you information directly from a primary source. As this takes significant time and effort, it is more likely that you will use previously published primary sources rather than carrying out your own research. To streamline your project even more, you could use secondary research sources, which are articles, books, and websites that are compilations or interpretations of the primary sources.

As you prepare your presentation, your employer or audience may have specific requirements for your sources. He or she might require a mix of sources in different formats. It is important that you note where you found your information in your presentation – a process called citation, or referencing. This includes any visuals you might use such as photographs, graphics, logos, etc.

Whenever possible, seek out original sources for the information you will use — for example, if you are using statistics about the amount of steel produced in Canada per year, you would collect that information from Statistics Canada. The next-best option is to find sources that are considered trustworthy: academic journals, books, well-known newspapers and magazines, and certain organizations.

> College Libraries Ontario's Learning Portal has a comprehensive guide on how to do research, along with tips on how to evaluate the quality of your sources.

8.6 Organizational Models for Presentations

Once you've completed your research, you'll begin to collect your material into a series of main points by using an organizational model. Different models are used for different types of presentations – you'll need to refer back to your Audience-Context-Purpose, as well as your purpose statement, to determine which will best suit your presentation.

Chronological Pattern

Chronological always refers to time order. Since the specific purpose is about stages, it is necessary to put the four stages in the right order. It would make no sense to put the fourth stage second and the third stage first. However, chronological time can be long or short. If you are giving a presentation about the history of your company, that may cover years of decades. If your presentation is about a product development cycle, it may only a few weeks or months. The commonality is the order of the information. Chronological speeches that refer to processes are usually given to promote understanding of a process, or to promote action and instruction.

Spatial Pattern

Another common thought process is movement in space or direction, which is called the spatial pattern. With this pattern, the information is organized based on a place or space that the audience can imagine (or "decode") easily. A spatial-pattern presentation might cover the regional sales results for an automotive manufacturer, from the east coast to the west coast of Canada.

Topical Pattern/Parts-of-the-Whole Pattern

The topical organizational pattern is probably the most all-purpose pattern, used most often in informational and persuasive presentations. Many subjects will have main points that naturally divide into: "types of," "kinds of," "sorts of," or "categories of." Other subjects naturally divide into "parts of the whole." However, you will want to keep your categories simple, clear, distinct, and at five or fewer.

Another principle of organization to think about when using topical organization is "climax" organization. That means putting your strongest argument or most important point last when applicable. This model is used most often in sales presentations and proposals.

Cause/Effect Pattern

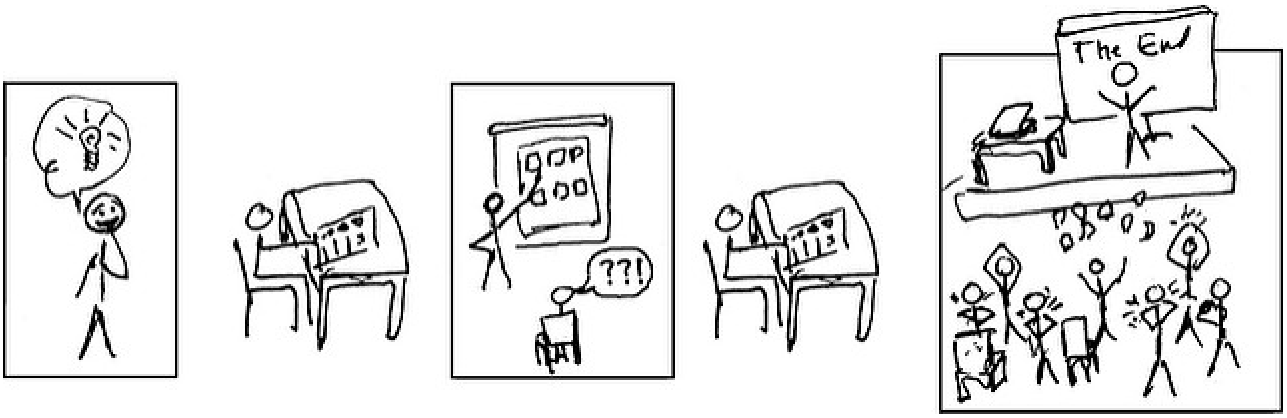
If the specific purpose mentions words such as "causes," "origins," "roots of," "foundations," "basis," "grounds," or "source," it is a causal order; if it mentions words such as "effects," "results," "outcomes," "consequences," or "products," it is effect order. If it mentions both, it would of course be cause/effect order.

Problem-Solution Pattern

The problem-solution pattern is most often used in persuasive presentations. The principle behind problem-solution pattern is that if you explain to an audience a problem, you should not leave them hanging without solutions. Problems are discussed for understanding and to do something about them. Additionally, when you want to persuade someone to act, the first reason is usually that something is wrong!

A variation of the problem-solution pattern, and one that sometimes requires more in-depth exploration of an issue, is the “problem-cause-solution” pattern. In many cases, you can’t really solve a problem without first identifying what caused the problem. This is similar to the organizational pattern called Monroe’s Motivated Sequence (German et al., 2012).

8.7 Outlining Your Presentation



"ST035: *Figure 15.6*" *by* Rosenfield Media, CC BY 2.0

You're now ready to prepare an outline for your presentation. To be successful in your presentation, you should have two outlines: a preparation outline, and a speaking outline.

Preparation outlines are comprehensive outlines that include all of the information in your presentation. Your presentation outline will consist of the content of what the audience will see and hear. Eventually, you will move away from this outline as you develop your materials and practice your presentation.

Your speaking outline will contain notes to guide you, and is usually not shared with your audience. It will summarize the full preparation outline down to abbreviated notes for the actual delivery; although a PowerPoint may give you enough detail to spark your memory, it is always good to have a backup plan in case your mind goes blank while in front of your audience. Sometimes nerves can get the best of us!

Your organizational model will help determine how you will structure your preparation outline. However, most, if not all, of the organization models will align with this structure:

1. *Attention Statement:* an engaging or interesting statement that will cause your audience to sit up and take notice.
2. *Introduction:* setting out your general idea statement and giving the audience an idea of what to expect.
3. *Body:* This section contains your research, main points, and other relevant information. It will follow your organizational pattern.
4. *Conclusion:* reiterating your idea statement, and/or includes a call-to-action — what you want the audience to do or think about following your presentation.
5. *Residual Message*: this is an optional section, but a powerful one. It is the final message you want the audience to remember.

You can use your presentation outline as a starting point to developing your speaking outline. It's a good idea to make speaking notes to align with your main points and visuals in each section.

UNC Libraries Presentation Planning Worksheet

Using Examples and Scenarios

Presenters will often use examples and scenarios to help illustrate the their message. The main difference between examples and scenarios is that while both help "show" the audience what you mean, an example is the "thing" itself, while a scenario would include more detail about the sequence or development of events. Scenarios also tend to be longer and more nuanced.

An 'example' of a sales target might be: to sell 500 units in 30 days. A 'scenario' might be described as: Company A is selling vacuums to the Atlantic Canada region. They are trying to increase their sales, and so have set a target of 500 units in the region in 30 days, using a sales incentive program for employees and promoting a sale at local stores.

A Word About Storytelling

Storytelling can be an effective way to convey your message to your audience. Stories are a fundamental part of the human experience, and, if well-told, can resonate with listeners. Some of the most inspiring TEDTalks speakers use storytelling effectively in their presentations. You can find out more about how to incorporate storytelling techniques into presentations from the TEDTAlk speakers directly.

7 Storytelling Techniques Used by the Most Inspiring TED Presenters

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8.8 Transitions

By now you have identified your main points, chosen your organizational pattern, written your outline, and are ready to begin putting your presentation together. But how will you connect your main points together in a relevant manner, so that your presentation appears fluid?

Transitions are words, phrases, or visual devices that help the audience follow the speaker's ideas, connect the main points to each other, and see the relationships you've created in the information you are presenting. Transitions are used by the speaker to guide the audience in the progression from one significant idea, concept or point to the next issue. They can also show the relationship between the main point and the support the speaker uses to illustrate, provide examples for, or reference outside sources. Depending on your purpose, transitions can serve different roles as you help create the glue that will connect your points together in a way the audience can easily follow.

- *Internal summaries*: a type of connective transition that emphasizes what has come before and remind the audience of what has been covered. Examples include: *as I have said*, *as we have seen*, *as mentioned earlier*, *in any event*, *in other words*, *in short*, *on the whole*, *therefore*, *to summarize*, *as a result*, *as I've noted previously*, *in conclusion*.
- *Internal previews*: a type of connective that emphasizes what is coming up next in the speech and what to expect with regard to the content. Examples include: *if we look ahead to*, *next we'll examine*, *now we can focus our attention on*, *first we'll look at*, *then we'll examine*.
- *Signposts*: a type of connective transition that emphasizes physical movement through the speech content and lets the audience know exactly where they are: *stop and consider*, *we can now address*, *next I'd like to explain*, *turning from/to*, *another*, *this reminds me of*, *I would like to emphasize*.
- *Time*: focuses on the chronological aspects of your speech order. Particularly useful in a speech utilizing a story, this transition can illustrate for the audience progression of time. Examples: *before*, *earlier*, *immediately*, *in the meantime*, *in the past*, *lately*, *later*, *meanwhile*, *now*, *presently*, *shortly*, *simultaneously*, *since*, *so far*, *soon as long as*, *as soon as*, *at last*, *at length*, *at that time*, *then*, *until*, *afterward*.
- *Compare/Contrast*: draws a parallel or distinction between two ideas, concepts, or examples. It can indicate a common or divergent area between points for the audience: *in the same way*, *by the same token*, *equally*, *similarly*, *just as we have seen*, *in the same vein*.
- *Cause and Effect or Result*: illustrates a relationship between two ideas, concepts, or examples and may focus on the outcome or result. It can illustrate a relationship between points for the audience. Examples: *as a result*, *because*, *consequently*, *for this purpose*, *accordingly*, *so*, *then*, *therefore*, *thereupon*, *thus*, *to this end*, *for this reason*, *as a result*, *because*, *therefore*, *consequently*, *as a consequence*, *and the outcome was…*
- *Example*: illustrates a connection between a point and an example or examples. You may find visual aids work well with this type of transition. Examples: *in fact*, *as we can see*, *after all*, *even*, *for example*, *for instance*, *of course*, *specifically*, *such as*, *in the following example*, *to illustrate my point*.
- *Place*: refers to a location, often in a spatially organized speech, of one point of emphasis to another. Again, visual aids work well when discussing physical location with an audience. Examples include: *opposite to*, *there*, *to the left*, *to the right*, *above*, *below*, *adjacent to*, *elsewhere*, *far*, *farther on*, *beyond*, *closer to*, *here*, *near*, *nearby*, *next to…*
- *Clarification:* A clarification transition restates or further develops a main idea or point. It can also serve as a signal to a key point. *To clarify*, *that is*, *I mean*, *in other words*, *to put it another way*, *that is to say*, *to rephrase it*, *in order to explain*, *this means…*
- *Concession:* indicates knowledge of contrary information. It can address a perception the audience may hold and allow for clarification. *We can see that while*, *although it is true that*, *granted that*, *while it may appear that*, *naturally*, *of course*, *I can see that*, *I admit that even though…*

8.9 Conclusion

Reflection Activity

Returning to Naiomi's presentation to her potential client in the paper industry, what have you learned about organization and outlines that she might use to win the client?

- What might be her purpose statement? Central Idea Statement?
- What would be an appropriate pattern to use, based on her presentation's context-audience-purpose?
- What advice would you give her about her outline?

Quick Quiz

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=155#h5p-20

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=155#h5p-21

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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=155#h5p-22

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=155#h5p-23

Additional Resources

Listen to Leadership speaker Erin Meyer talk about the difference in communication styles in different societies. This presentation helps you deliver your message explicitly through words, rather than through feelings or assumptions. Leadership Speaker Erin Meyer: Low Context vs. High Context Societies

The commercial site from Inc. magazine presents an article on organizing your speech by Patricia Fripp, former president of the National Speakers Association. Writing and Organizing a Winning Speech

View an eHow video on how to organize a speech. How does the advice in this video differ from organizing advice given in this chapter? What Are the Five Organizational Patterns for Public Speaking?

Learn more about how to outline a speech from the Six Minutes public speaking and presentation skills blog. Speech Preparation #3: Don't Skip the Speech Outline

Glossary

Arrangement – means order, the organization of visual (and verbal) elements.

Clarity – strategies that help the receiver (audience) to decode the message, to understand it quickly and completely.

Cognate strategies – ways of framing, expressing, and representing a message to an audience.

Concise – being brief and direct in the visual and verbal delivery of your message.

Credibility – involves your qualities, capabilities, or power to elicit from the audience belief in your character.

Emphasis – stress, importance, or prominence—on some aspects of your speech.

Engagement – the relationship the speaker forms with the an audience.

Ethos – form of rhetorical proof outlined by Aristotle that involves the speaker's character and expertise.

Expectations – involve the often unstated, eager anticipation of the norms, roles and outcomes of the speaker and the speech.

Logos – form of rhetorical proof outlined by Aristotle that refers to the logic of the speaker's presentation.

Pathos – form of rhetorical proof outlined by Aristotle that refers to use of emotion as a persuasive element in the speech.

Primary source – information that is first-hand or straight from the source; information that is unfiltered by interpretation or editing.

Research – the collecting of information about a particular subject.

Reference – involves attention to the source and way you present your information.

Secondary source – information that is not directly from the source; information that has been compiled, filtered, edited, or interpreted in some way.

Tone – choice of words, your clothing, your voice, body language, the rhythm and cadence of your speech.

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CHAPTER 9: DELIVERING PRESENTATIONS

Chapter Summary

9.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, learners will be able to:

- Identify the different methods of speech delivery.
- Identify key elements in preparing to deliver a speech.
- Explain the benefits of delivery-related behaviours.
- Utilize specific techniques to enhance speech delivery.

Professional Perspective

Abe has spent weeks doing research and crafting a strong, well-prepared, researched presentation. On the day she gets in front of the finance team, she makes a few mistakes because of nerves. While she may view it as a complete failure, her audience will have gotten a lot of good information, and most likely written off her mistakes due to nerves (surely they would be nervous in the same situation!).

Abe's colleague, Chris, on the other hand, does almost no preparation for his presentation, but, being charming and comfortable in front of a crowd, smiles a lot while providing virtually nothing of substance. The audience takeaway from Chris's speech is, "I have no idea what he was talking about" and other feelings ranging from "He's good in front of an audience" to "I don't trust him."

As you read this chapter, consider strategies that Abe might use to reduce her nervousness, and ways that Chris might be better prepared for his presentations.

Many surveys have shown that public speaking is at the top of the list of fears for most people, sometimes higher on the list than death. Rarely is one afraid of writing a speech or conducting the research – but it's a completely different story when it comes to delivering it. The irony is that the few minutes spent on delivery is the thing people fear the most despite it being the aspect of public speaking requiring the least amount of time.

Watch this 15 minute TEDtalks video: Why People Fear Public Speaking with Dave Guin

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=158#oembed-1

Video: Why do we fear public speaking? | Dave Guin by TEDx Talks [15:35] Transcript Available

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9.1 Methods of Presentation Delivery

The Importance of Delivery

Delivery is what you are probably most concerned about when it comes to giving presentations. This chapter is designed to help you give the best delivery possible and eliminate some of the nervousness you might be feeling. To do that, you should first dismiss the myth that public speaking is just reading and talking at the same time. Speaking in public has more formality than talking. During a speech, you should present yourself professionally. This doesn't necessarily mean you must wear a suit or "dress up", but it does mean making yourself presentable by being well groomed and wearing clean, appropriate clothes. It also means being prepared to use language correctly and appropriately for the audience and the topic, to make eye contact with your audience, and to look like you know your topic well.

Image by *Renjinpeng*, *Pixabay Bay*

While speaking has more formality than talking, it has less formality than reading. Speaking allows for flexibility, meaningful pauses, eye contact, small changes in word order, and vocal emphasis. Reading is more or less an exact replication of words on paper without the use of nonverbal interpretation. If you think about great presentations you have seen and heard, you will realize that speaking provides a much more animated and engaging message.

Methods of Presentation Delivery

There are four methods of delivery that can help you balance between too much and too little formality when giving a presentation.

Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu speaking is the presentation of a short message without advance preparation. You have probably done impromptu speaking many times in informal, conversational settings. Self-introductions in group settings are examples of impromptu speaking: "Hi, my name is Steve, and I'm an account manager." Impromptu speaking also occurs when you answer a question such as, "What did you think of that report?" Your response is unplanned, so you are constructing your arguments and points as you speak. Now envision yourself going into a meeting when your boss suddenly says, "I want you to spend a few minutes talking about the last stage of the project…." Although you are not prepared to present on that topic, experience and practice may allow you to do so with relative ease.

The advantage of impromptu speaking is that it's spontaneous and responsive in an animated group context – your audience is not expecting perfection. The disadvantage, is that with little or no time to contemplate the central theme of your message, it may come out disorganized and difficult for listeners to follow. Although perfection is not possible, you will want to deliver a sound and coherent message, remembering that impromptu presentations are generally most successful when brief and focused on a single point.

Here is a step-by-step guide that may be useful if you are called upon to give an impromptu presentation in public:

1. Take a moment to collect your thoughts and plan the main point you want to make.
2. Thank the person for inviting you to speak. Avoid making comments about being unprepared, called upon at the last moment, on the spot, or feeling uneasy.
3. Deliver your message, making your main point as briefly as you can while still covering it adequately and at a pace your listeners can follow.
4. If you can, create some structure, using numbers if possible: "Two main reasons . . ." or "Three parts of our plan. . ." or "Two side effects of this drug. . ." Timeline structures are also effective, such as "past, present, and future or East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast".
5. Thank the person again for the opportunity to speak.
6. Stop talking (it is easy to "ramble on" when you don't have something prepared). If in front of an audience, don't keep talking as you move back to your seat.

For additional advice on impromptu speaking, watch the following 4 minute video

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=161#oembed-1

Video: Impromptu Speaking by Toastmasters International [4:00] Transcript available

Manuscript Presentations

Manuscript presentations are the word-for-word iteration of a written message. In a manuscript presentation, the speaker keeps their attention on the printed page except when using visual aids. The advantage of reading from a manuscript is the exact repetition of original words. In some circumstances this can be extremely important. For example, reading a statement about your organization's legal responsibilities to customers or announcing a new policy pertaining to maternity leave may require that the wording be exact.

A manuscript presentation may be appropriate at a more formal affair (like a report to shareholders), when your presentation must be said exactly as written in order to convey the proper emotion or decorum the situation deserves, however there are costs involved in manuscript presentations. First, it's typically an uninteresting way to present. Unless the presenter has rehearsed the reading as a complete performance, animated with vocal expression and gestures, the presentation will tend to be dull. Keeping one's eyes glued to the script prevents eye contact with the audience. For this kind of "straight" manuscript presentation to hold audience attention, the audience must be already interested in the message and presenter before the delivery begins.

It is worth noting that professional speakers, actors, news reporters, and politicians often read from an autocue device, commonly called a teleprompter, especially when appearing on television, where eye contact with the camera is crucial. With practice, a presenter can achieve a conversational tone and give the impression of speaking extemporaneously and maintaining eye contact while using an autocue device. However, success in this medium depends on two factors: (1) the presenter is already an accomplished public speaker who has learned to use a conversational tone while delivering a prepared script, and (2) the presentation is written in a style that sounds conversational and in spoken rather than written, edited English.

Extemporaneous Presentations

Extemporaneous presentations are carefully planned and rehearsed presentations, delivered in a conversational manner, using brief notes. By using notes rather than a full manuscript, the extemporaneous presenter can establish and maintain eye contact with the audience and assess how well they are understanding the presentation as it progresses. Without all the words on the page to read, you have little choice but to look up and make eye contact with your audience.

Watch the following 10 minute video of a champion speaker presenting his extemporaneous speech: 2017 *International Extemporaneous Speaking National Champion — Connor Rothschild Speech*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=161#oembed-2

Video: 2017 International Extemporaneous Speaking National Champion — Connor Rothschild Speech by Jennifer Rothschild [10:40] Transcript available

Presenting extemporaneously has some advantages. It promotes the likelihood that you, the speaker, will be perceived as knowledgeable and credible since you know the speech well enough that you don't need to read it. In addition, your audience is likely to pay better attention to the message because it is engaging both verbally and nonverbally. It also allows flexibility; you are working from the strong foundation of an outline, but if you need to delete, add, or rephrase something at the last minute to adapt to your audience, you can do so.

The disadvantage of extemporaneous presentations is that it in some cases it does not allow for the verbal and the nonverbal preparation that are almost always required for a good speech.

Adequate preparation cannot be achieved the day before you're scheduled to present, so be aware that if you want to present a credibly delivered speech, you will need to practice many times. Because extemporaneous presenting is the style used in the great majority of business presentation situations, most of the information in the subsequent sections of this chapter is targeted toward this kind of speaking.

Memorized Speaking

Memorized speaking is the recitation of a written message that the speaker has committed to memory. Actors, of course, recite from memory whenever they perform from a script in a stage play, television program, or movie scene. When it comes to speeches, memorization can be useful when the message needs to be exact and the speaker doesn't want to be confined by notes.

The advantage to memorization is that it enables the speaker to maintain eye contact with the audience throughout the speech. Being free of notes means that you can move freely around the stage and use your hands to make gestures. If your speech uses visual aids, this freedom is even more of an advantage. However, there are some real and potential costs.

First, unless you also plan and memorize every vocal cue (the subtle but meaningful variations in speech delivery, which can include the use of pitch, tone, volume, and pace), gesture, and facial expression, your presentation will be flat and uninteresting, and even the most fascinating topic will suffer. Second, if you lose your place and start trying to ad lib, the contrast in your style of delivery will alert your audience that something is wrong. More frighteningly, if you go completely blank during the presentation, it will be extremely difficult to find your place and keep going. Obviously, memorizing a five to seven minute presentation takes a great deal of time and effort, and if you aren't used to memorizing, it is very difficult to pull off. Realistically, you will probably not have the time necessary to give a completely memorized speech. However, if you practice adequately, your approach will still feel like you are being extemporaneous.

9.2 Preparing For Your Delivery

Your audiences, circumstances, and physical contexts for presenting can vary. Being prepared to deal with different presenting situations can help reduce anxiety around giving a speech, so let's look at some common factors to keep in mind as you prepare for a typical business presentation.

Using Lecterns: Lecterns add formality to the presentation situation, but they can be tempting to hide behind. Use a lectern only to hold your notes only. This will enhance your eye contact as well as free up your hands for gesturing, thus giving the appearance of confidence.

Large spaces: auditoriums or other large spaces can be intimidating. Preparation and practice will prevent poor performance; a rehearsal, if available, can also ease nerves. Slow your speech to allow for echo, and adjust visual aids so they can be seen by those in the back of the hall.

Small spaces: small areas are usually easier to manage for presenters, but you will need to proceed more carefully with things such as note cards and visual aids; close quarters may allow your audience to read your notes, video prompts, etc. Ideally, arrive early to set up your presentation material, check out the space, and prevent fumbling or delays.

Outdoors: Noise (cars, wind, sirens), insects, weather, blinding sun, and other environmental factors may be hard to control. Do your best to project your voice without yelling, and choose locations that are quiet, sheltered, and free of passersby if possible.

Using a Microphone: you can avoid difficulties with microphones by doing a rehearsal or test ahead of time. Ensure you enunciate clearly and leave a few inches between your face and the microphone.

Small Audience Size: A small audience will allow for greater contact, but may invite interruptions. Deal with any questions politely and, if necessary, let your audience know that you will answer specific questions at the end of the presentation. You may wish to set the agenda at the beginning so that the audience knows there will be a question and answer period at the end.

The following web pages provide some additional concepts and strategies for presentations:

- Five Presentation Mistakes Everyone Makes
- The Ten Most Common Presentation Mistakes
- 8 Tips on Giving Presentations Like a Pro

9.3 Practising Your Delivery

There is no foolproof recipe for good delivery. You are a unique person, and you embody different experiences and interests from others. This means you have an approach, or a style, that is effective for you. It also means that your concern about what others think of you can cause anxiety, even during the most carefully researched and interesting presentation. There are some techniques you can use to minimize that anxious feeling, however, and put yourself in the best possible position to succeed on presentation day. You need to prepare for your presentation in as realistic a simulation as possible. What follows are some general tips to keep in mind, essentially all derived from one very straight-forward premise: Practice your presentation beforehand, at home or elsewhere, the way you will give it in person.

Practice Your Presentation Out Loud

Practice allows you to learn what to say, when and how to say it, but it also lets you know where potential problems lie. Since you will be speaking with a normal volume for your presentation, you need to practice that way, even at home. This not only helps you learn the presentation, but will help identify any places where you tend to mispronounce words or forget what's coming next. Also, sentences on paper do not always translate well to the spoken medium. Practising out loud allows you to actually hear where you have trouble and fix it before getting up in front of the audience.

Practice Your Presentation Standing Up

You will likely be standing for your presentation so it's best to practice it that way. As mentioned in more detail below, the default position for delivering a presentation is with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees slightly bent. Practising this way, adding in natural movement and gestures, will help develop muscle memory and make it feel more natural when you are doing it for real.

Practice Your Presentation with an Audience

The best way to prepare for an audience watching your presentation is to have someone watch you practice. Ask your colleagues, friends, family, or significant other to listen while you run through what you will say. Not only will you get practice in front of a supportive audience, but you can also garner helpful feedback and resolve issues ahead of time. During practice, it may help to pick out some strategically placed objects around the room to occasionally glance at just to get into the habit of looking around more often and making eye contact with multiple people in your audience.

Practice Your Presentation for Time

You will generally have a time limit for presentations. As a rule of thumb, plan to have at least a 60-second "buffer" at the end of your presentation in case something comes up. For example, if your presentation is set for five minutes, plan for four. Should you rush through, make sure you can add more detail to the end of your presentation if needed. If an audience member has questions, you will still finish on time. With all of this in mind, practicing at least three times at home will help ensure your presentation is properly timed; practicing in front of an audience, even if only one friend, may provide the added benefit of alerting you as to how your pace may change if nerves kick in.

Practice Your Presentation by Filming Yourself

There is nothing that alerts you to a problem and encourages you to correct it faster than seeing yourself doing something you don't like on video. By watching yourself, you will notice all the small things you do that might prove to be distracting during the actual presentation.

> It is important enough that it deserves reiterating: Practice your speech beforehand, at home or elsewhere, the way you will give it on the scheduled day. You won't regret it.

9.4 What to Do When Delivering Your Speech

The interplay between the verbal and nonverbal components of your speech can bring the message vividly to life, or it can confuse or bore the audience. It is best that you neither over-dramatize your speech delivery behaviours nor downplay them. This is a balance achieved through rehearsal, trial and error, and experience. One way to think of this is in terms of the Goldilocks paradigm: you don't want to overdo the delivery because you might distract your audience by looking hyper or overly animated. Conversely, someone whose delivery is too understated (meaning they don't move their hands or feet at all) looks unnatural and uncomfortable, which can also be distracting. Like Goldilocks, you want a delivery that is "just right". This middle ground between too much and too little is a much more natural approach to public speaking, and will be covered in more detail in the following discussions regarding aspects of your delivery and what you need to think about while actually giving your speech.

Watch the following 10 minute video: *Use Body Language to Rock Your Next Presentation*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=167#oembed-1

Video: Use Body Language to Rock Your Next Presentation by Stanford Graduate School of Business [10:09]
Transcript Available

Hands: Use your hands as naturally as you would in normal conversation. Try to pay attention to what you do with your hands in regular conversations with friends, family, and coworkers, then incorporate that into your delivery.

Feet: stand shoulder-width apart, keeping your knees slightly bent. If you are comfortable, try walking around a bit if space allows, and it appears natural in practice. Avoid shifting from foot-to-foot, rocking back on your feet, or bouncing nervously.

Objects: bring only what you need to give your presentation. Anything else will be a distraction. Turn off any personal devices (cell phones, tablets or messaging on a laptop you are using for PowerPoint) so there are no interruptions.

Clothing: dress professionally, based on the culture of your organization. Avoid jewellery that could make noise, uncomfortable shoes, or other distracting items. You may wish to tie back long hair so you are not tempted to touch or move it.

Eye Contact: Eye contact is an extremely important element of your delivery. The general rule of thumb is to aim for 80 percent of your total speech time to be spent making eye contact with your audience (Lucas, 2015, p. 250).

Watch the following videos for additional visual advice:

5 minute video: *How to Make Eye Contact When Presenting*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=167#oembed-2

Video: How to Make Eye Contact When Presenting by Alexander Lyon [4:46] Transcript available

8 minute video: Video For Practicing Eye Contact – *FOUR Difficulty Levels*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=167#oembed-3

Video: Video For Practicing Eye Contact – FOUR Difficulty Levels by Improvement Pill [8:20] Transcript available

Volume: The volume you use should fit the size of the audience and the room.

Rate: How quickly or slowly you say the words of your speech makes a difference. You will want to maintain a good, deliberate rate at the beginning of your speech because your audience will be getting used to your voice.

Vocalized Pauses: Everyone uses vocalized pauses to some degree, but not everyone's are problematic. Pauses can be great attention getters, but can also become a distraction if overused. Identify your own common vocalized pauses and try to catch yourself to reduce your dependence on them.

The items listed above represent the major delivery issues you will want to be aware of when giving a speech, but is by no means an exhaustive list. One final piece of delivery advice? No matter how hard you practice and how diligent you are in preparing for your presentation, you are most likely going to mess up some aspect at some point. That's normal. Everyone does it. The key is not to make a big deal about it. Odds are that your audience will never even realize your mistake if you don't tell them there was one.

9.5 Conclusion

Good delivery is meant to augment your presentation and help convey your information to the audience. Anything that potentially distracts your audience means that fewer people will be informed, persuaded, or entertained by what you have to say. Practising your presentation in an environment that closely resembles the actual situation you will be speaking in will better prepare you for what to do and how to deliver your speech when it really counts.

Reflection Activity

Returning to Abe's story, where she felt well-prepared but became nervous in the moment of her presentation, what did you learn in this chapter that might be useful for her (or for yourself) related to last minute nerves? What about Abe's colleague Chris. He was very unprepared for his presentation. What have you learned in this chapter about preparation?

Something to Think About

Most people struggle with at least one aspect of delivery: voice, posture, eye contact, distracting movement, vocalized pauses, etc. What do you struggle with? Based on this chapter and what you have already experienced in class, what is your biggest takeaway about improving delivery?

Quick Quiz

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
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https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=169#h5p-25

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=169#h5p-26

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=169#h5p-27

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=169#h5p-28

Additional Resources

Duarte, N. (2011). The secret structure of great talks [Video].

Glossary

Extemporaneous presentations – carefully planned and rehearsed presentations, delivered in a conversational manner using brief notes.

Impromptu presentation/speaking – the presentation of a short message without advance preparation.

Manuscript presentations – the word-for-word iteration of a written message.

Memorized speaking – the recitation of a written message that the speaker has committed to memory.

Rate – how quickly or slowly you say the words of your speech.

Chapter References

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CHAPTER 10: INFORMATIVE PRESENTATIONS

Chapter Preview

10.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, learners will be able to:

- Describe the functions of the speech to inform.
- Provide examples of four main types of speech to inform.
- Articulate and demonstrate an audience-centred perspective.
- Provide and demonstrate examples of ways to facilitate active listening.
- Discuss and provide examples of ways to incorporate ethics in a speech.

Professional Perspective

Dhavit is passionate about the environment and is planning on using his knowledge to develop a speech to help make his colleagues more aware of the impact people are having on the world in terms of pollution. As you read through this chapter, consider how Dhavit might adapt his planning and delivery to teach and inform his colleagues.

Storytelling is a basic part of human communication. With each story you were sharing information, but is sharing the same as informing?

At some point in your business career you will be called upon to teach someone something. It may be a customer, coworker, or supervisor, and in each case you are performing an informative speech. It is distinct from a sales presentation, or persuasive speech, in that your goal is to communicate the information so that your listener understands. The informative speech is one performance you'll give many times across your career, whether your audience is one person, a small group, or a large auditorium full of listeners. Once you master the art of the informative presentation, you may mix and match it with other styles and techniques.

Watch the following 2 minute video from Commander Chris Hadfield: *How Astronauts Wash Their Hands in Space*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=172#oembed-1

Video: Chris Hadfield demonstrates how astronauts wash their hands in space by Canadian Space Agency [1:45] Transcript available

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10.1 Functions of the Presentation to Inform

Informative presentations focus on helping the audience to understand a topic, issue, or technique more clearly. There are distinct functions inherent in a speech to inform, and you may choose to use one or more of these functions in your presentation. Let's take a look at the functions and see how they relate to the central objective of facilitating audience understanding.

Share

The basic definition of communication highlights the process of understanding and sharing meaning. An informative speech follows this definition when a speaker shares content and information with an audience. As part of your presentation, you may not have your audience ask a lot of questions during your speech, and won't typically be asking them to solve a problem. Instead you'd be offering to share some of the information you have gathered related to a topic.

"Speech" by Scott Schiller, CC BY 2.0

Increase Understanding

How well does your audience grasp the information? This should be a guiding question to you on two levels. The first involves what they already know—or don't know—about your topic, and what key terms or ideas might be necessary for someone completely unfamiliar with your topic to grasp the ideas you are presenting. The second involves your presentation and the illustration of ideas. The audience will respond to your attention statement and hopefully maintain interest, but how will you take your speech beyond superficial coverage of content and effectively communicate key relationships that increase understanding? These questions should serve as a challenge for your informative presentation, and by looking at your speech from an audience-oriented perspective, you will increase your ability to increase the audience's understanding.

Change Perceptions

How you perceive something has everything to do with a range of factors that are unique to you. We all want to make sense of our world, share our experiences, and learn that many people face the same challenges we do. For instance, many people perceive the process of speaking in public as a significant challenge, and in this text, we have broken down the process into several manageable steps. In so doing, we have to some degree changed your perception of public speaking.

When you present your speech to inform, you may want to change the audience members' perceptions of your topic. You may present an informative speech on air pollution and want to change common perceptions such as the idea that most of North America's air pollution comes from private cars. You won't be asking people to go out and vote, or change their choice of automobiles, but you will help your audience change their perceptions of your topic.

Gain Skills

Just as you want to increase the audience's understanding, you may want to help the audience members gain skills. If you are presenting a speech on how to make a meal from fresh ingredients, your audience may thank you for not only the knowledge of the key ingredients and their preparation, but also the product available at the conclusion. If your audience members have never made their own meal, they may gain a new skill through your presentation.

Exposition versus Interpretation

When you share information informally, you often provide your own perspective and attitude for your own reasons. The presentation to inform the audience on a topic, idea, or area of content is not intended to be a display of attitude and opinion.

The speech to inform is like the classroom setting in that the goal is to inform, not to persuade, entertain, display attitude, or create comedy. If you have analyzed your audience, you'll be better prepared to develop appropriate ways to gain their attention and inform them on your topic. You want to communicate thoughts, ideas, and relationships and allow each listener specifically, and the audience generally, to draw their own conclusions. *The speech to inform is all about sharing information to meet the audience's needs, not your own.*

Exposition

This relationship between informing as opposed to persuading your audience is often expressed in terms of exposition versus interpretation.

Exposition means a public exhibition or display, often expressing a complex topic in a way that makes the relationships and content clear. The goal is to communicate the topic and content to your audience in ways that illustrate, explain, and reinforce the overall content to make your topic more accessible to the audience. The audience wants to learn about your topic and may have some knowledge on it as you do. It is your responsibility to consider ways to display the information effectively.

Interpretation and Bias

Interpretation involves adapting the information to communicate a message, perspective, or agenda. Your insights and attitudes will guide your selection of material, what you focus on, and what you delete (choosing what not to present to the audience). Your interpretation will involve personal bias.

Bias is an unreasoned or not-well-thought-out judgment. Bias involves beliefs or ideas held on the basis of conviction rather than current evidence. **Beliefs** are often called "habits of the mind" because we come to rely on them to make decisions. Which is the better, cheapest, most expensive, or the middle-priced product? People often choose the middle-priced product and use the belief "if it costs more it must be better" (and the opposite: "if it is cheap it must not be very good"). The middle-priced item, regardless of actual price, is often perceived as "good enough." All these perceptions are based on beliefs, and they may not apply to the given decision or even be based on any evidence or rational thinking.

We take mental shortcuts all day long, but in our speech to inform, we have to be careful not to reinforce bias.

Point of View

Clearly no one can be completely objective and remove themselves from their own perceptual process. People express themselves and naturally relate what is happening now to what has happened to them in the past. You are your own artist, but you also control your creations.

Objectivity involves expressions and perceptions of facts that are free from distortion by your prejudices, bias, feelings or interpretations. For example, is the post office box blue? An objective response would be yes or no, but a subjective response might sound like "Well, it's not really blue as much as it is navy, even a bit of purple." **Subjectivity** involves expressions or perceptions that are modified, altered, or impacted by your personal bias, experiences, and background. In an informative speech, your audience will expect you to present the information in a relatively objective form. The speech should meet the audience's need as they learn about the content, not your feelings, attitudes, or commentary on the content.

Here are five suggestions to help you present *a neutral speech*:

1. Keep your language neutral.
2. Keep your sources credible and not from biased organizations.
3. Keep your presentation balanced. If you use a source that supports one clear side of an issue, include an alternative source and view. Give each equal time and respectful consideration.
4. Keep your audience in mind. Not everyone will agree with every point or source of evidence, but diversity in your speech will have more to offer everyone.
5. Keep who you represent in mind: Your business and yourself.

To summarize, the purpose of an informative speech is to share ideas with the audience, increase their understanding, change their perceptions, or help them gain new skills.

An informative speech incorporates the speaker's point of view but not attitude or interpretation.

10.2 Types of Presentations to Inform

Speaking to inform may fall into one of several categories. The presentation to inform may be

- an explanation,
- a report,
- a description,
- or a demonstration of how to do something.

In the sections below each of these types of informative speech will be described.

Explanation

Have you ever listened to a lecture or speech where you just didn't get it? It wasn't that you weren't interested, at least not at first. Perhaps the presenter used language you didn't understand or gave a confusing example. Soon you probably lost interest and sat there, attending the speech in body but certainly not in mind. An effective presentation to inform will take a complex topic or issue and explain it to the audience in ways that increase audience understanding.

No one likes to feel left out. As the speaker, it's your responsibility to ensure that this doesn't happen. Also know that to teach someone something new—perhaps a skill that they did not posses or a perspective that allows them to see new connections—is a real gift, both to you and the audience members. You will feel rewarded because you made a difference and they will perceive the gain in their own understanding.

Watch the following 2 minute video: *Understand the Blockchain in Two Minutes*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=183#oembed-1

Video: Understand the Blockchain in Two Minutes by Institute for the Future [2:25] *Transcript available*

Report

As a business communicator, you may be called upon to give an **informative report** where you communicate status, trends, or relationships that pertain to a specific topic. The informative report is a speech where you organize your information around key events, discoveries, or technical data and provide context and illustration for your audience. They may naturally wonder, “Why are sales up (or down)?” or “What is the product leader in your lineup?” and you need to anticipate their perspective and present the key information that relates to your topic.

Description

Have you ever listened to a friend tell you about their recent trip somewhere and found the details fascinating, making you want to travel there or visit a similar place? **Describing** information requires emphasis on language that is vivid, captures attention, and excites the imagination. Your audience will be drawn to your effective use of colour, descriptive language, and visual aids. An informative speech that focuses description will be visual in many ways. Use your imagination to place yourself in their perspective: how would you like to have someone describe the topic to you?

Demonstration

You want to teach the audience how to program the applications on a new smartphone. A **demonstrative speech** focuses on clearly showing a process and telling the audience important details about each step so that they can imitate, repeat, or do the action themselves. Consider the visual aids or supplies you will need.

By considering each step and focusing on how to simplify it, you can understand how the audience might grasp the new information and how you can best help them. Also, consider the desired outcome; for example, will your listeners be able to actually do the task themselves? Regardless of the sequence or pattern you will illustrate or demonstrate, consider how people from your anticipated audience will respond, and budget additional time for repetition and clarification.

Chefs inform through demonstration. Although they make it seem easy, it is complex and difficult.

Informative presentations come in all sizes, shapes, and forms. The main goal in an informative presentation is to inform, not to persuade, and that requires an emphasis on credibility, for the speaker and the data or information presented.

Here are additional, more specific types of informative presentations:

- Biographical information
- Case study results
- Comparative advantage results
- Cost-benefit analysis results
- Feasibility studies
- Field study results
- Financial trends analysis
- Health, safety, and accident rates
- Instruction guidelines
- Laboratory results
- Product or service orientations
- Progress reports
- Research results
- Technical specifications

Depending on the situation, the audience, and the specific information to be presented, any of these types of presentation may be given as an explanation, a report, a description, or a demonstration.

In summary, an informative speech may explain, report, describe, or demonstrate how to do something.

10.3 Adapting Your Presentation to Teach

Successfully delivering an informative speech requires adopting an audience-centred perspective. Imagine that you are in the audience. What would it take for the speaker to capture and maintain your attention? What would encourage you to listen? In this section we present several techniques for achieving this, including motivating your audience to listen, framing your information in meaningful ways, and designing your presentation to appeal to diverse learning styles.

Motivating the Listener

In an ideal world, every audience member would be interested in your topic. Unfortunately, not everyone will be equally interested in your informative presentation. So what is a speaker to do in order to motivate the listener?

The perception process involves selection or choice, and you want your audience to choose to listen to you. Begin with your attention statement at the beginning of your speech and make sure it is dynamic and arresting. Remember what active listening involves, and look for opportunities throughout your presentation to encourage active listening.

Review and consider using the seven strategies below by posing questions that audience members may think, but not actually say out loud, when deciding whether to listen to your speech. By considering each question, you will take a more audience-centred approach to developing your presentation, thus increasing your effectiveness.

"*appX Cambridge 2012 Participants*" *by* *bobfamiliar*, CC BY 4.0

1. How Is Your Topic Relevant to Me?

A natural question audience members will ask themselves is, what does the topic have to do with me? Why should I care about it? Relevance means that the information applies, relates, or has significance to the listener. Find areas of common ground and build on them in your presentation.

2. What Will I Learn from You?

This question involves several issues. How much does the audience already know about your subject? What areas do you think they might not know? First, build on the information the audience knows; by briefly reviewing it, then extending it, illustrating it, and demonstrating its impact, you inform them of things they didn't already know.

3. Why Are You Interested in This Topic?

Your interest in your topic is an excellent way to encourage your audience to listen. You probably selected your topic with your audience in mind, but also considered your interest in the topic. Why did you choose it over other topics? What about your topic aroused your attention? Did it stimulate your curiosity? Did it make you excited about researching and preparing a speech on it? These questions will help you clarify your interest, and by sharing the answers with your listeners, you will stimulate excitement on their part.

4. How Can I Use the Knowledge or Skills You Present to Me?

In an informative speech you are not asking your listeners to go out and vote, or to quit smoking tomorrow, as you would in a persuasive speech. Nevertheless, you need to consider how they will apply their new understanding. Application involves the individual's capacity for practical use of the information, skill, or knowledge. As a result of your presentation, will your listeners be able to do something new or understand a topic better?

5. What Is New about What You Propose to Present?

People are naturally attracted to something new, unusual, or unfamiliar – but we also like predictability. As a speaker, how do you meet the two contrasting needs for familiarity and something new? Address both!

You may want to start by forming a clear foundation on what you have in common with the audience. Present the known elements of your topic and then extend into areas where less is known, increasing the new information as you progress. People will feel comfortable with the familiar, and be intrigued by the unfamiliar.

6. Are You Going to Bore Me?

You have probably sat through your fair share of boring lectures where the speaker, teacher, or professor talks at length in a relatively monotone voice, fails to alternate his or her pace, incorporates few visual aids or just reads from a PowerPoint for an hour in a dimly lighted room. Recall how you felt. Trapped? Tired? Did you wonder why you had to be there? Now you know what you need to avoid!

Being bored means the speaker failed to stimulate you as the listener, probably increased your resistance to listening or participating, and became tiresome. To avoid boring your audience, speak with enthusiasm, and consider ways to gain, and keep gaining, their attention. You don't have to be a standup comedian, however, to avoid being a boring speaker.

Consider the question, “What’s in it for me?” from the audience’s perspective and plan to answer it specifically with vivid examples. If your presentation meets their expectations and meets their needs, listeners are more likely to give you their attention.

You may also give some thought and consideration to the organizational principle and choose a strategy that promises success. By organizing the information in interesting ways within the time frame, you can increase your effectiveness.

7. Is This Topic Really as Important as You Say It Is?

No one wants to feel like his or her time is being wasted. What is important to you and what is important to your audience may be two different things. Take time and plan to reinforce in your speech how the topic is important to your audience. Importance involves perceptions of worth, value, and usefulness.

Framing

The presentation of information shapes attitudes and behaviour. This is done through framing and content. Framing involves placing an imaginary set of boundaries, much like a frame around a picture or a window, around a story, of what is included and omitted, influencing the story itself. What lies within the frame that we can see? What lies outside the frame that we cannot see?

Setting the agenda, just like the agenda of a meeting, means selecting what the audience will see and hear and in what order. In giving a speech, you select the information and set the agenda. You may choose to inform the audience on a topic that gets little press coverage, or use a popular story widely covered in a new way, with a case example and local statistics.

Another aspect of framing your message is culture. Themes of independence, overcoming challenging circumstances, and hard-fought victories may represent aspects of certain cultures in the world. If appropriate for your topic, consider localizing your presentation to incorporate cultural values in the region or nation of your audience

Additional Tips for Success

Andrews, Andrews, and Williams (1999) offer eight ways to help listeners learn. These are adapted and augmented here.

1. Limit the Number of Details

While it may be tempting to include many of the facts you’ve found in your research, choose only those that clearly inform your audience. You don’t want the audience focusing on a long list of facts and details only to miss your main points.

2. Focus on Clear Main Points

Your audience should be able to discern your main points clearly the first time. You'll outline them in your introduction and they will listen for them as you proceed. Connect supporting information to your clear main points to reinforce them, and provide verbal cues of points covered and points to come.

3. Pace Yourself

Talking too fast is a common expression of speech anxiety. One way to reduce your anxiety level is to practice and know your information well. When you deliver your presentation, knowing that you have time, are well-prepared, and are familiar with your personal speech patterns will help you pace yourself more effectively.

4. Speak with Concern for Clarity

Not everyone speaks English as their first language, and even among English speakers, there is a wide discrepancy in speaking style and language use. When you choose your language, consider challenging terms and define them accordingly. As your rate of speech picks up, you may tend to slur words together and drop or de-emphasize consonants, especially at the ends of words. Doing this will make your presentation harder to understand and will discourage listening.

5. Use Restatement and Repetition

There is nothing wrong with restating main points or repeating key phrases.

6. Provide Visual Reinforcement

As a speaker giving a prepared presentation, you have the luxury of preparing your visual aids with your audience in mind. Take advantage of the known time frame before your speech to prepare effective visual aids and your presentation will be more effective.

7. Include Time for Questions

You can't possibly cover all the information about a topic that every audience member would want to know in a speech that is under 10 minutes. In some situations, the speaker will accept and answer questions during the body of the presentation, but it is more typical to ask listeners to hold their questions until the end.

8. Look for Ways to Involve Listeners Actively

Instead of letting your audience sit passively, motivate them to get involved in your presentation. You might ask for a show of hands as you raise a question like, "How many of you have wondered about…?" You might point out the window, encouraging your audience to notice a weather pattern or an example of air pollution. Stepping away from the podium can also provide variety and increase active listening.

To present a successful informative speech, motivate your audience by making your material relevant and useful, finding interesting ways to frame your topic, and emphasizing new aspects if the topic is a familiar one.

10.4 Preparing Your Speech to Inform

Now that you've reviewed issues central to the success of your informative presentation, there's no doubt you want to get down to work. Here are five final suggestions to help you succeed.

1. Start with What You Know

Regardless of where you draw the inspiration, it's a good strategy to start with what you know and work from there. You'll be more enthusiastic, helping your audience to listen intently, and you'll save yourself time.

2. Consider Your Audience's Prior Knowledge

The audience will want to learn something from you, not hear everything they have heard before. Think about age, gender, and socioeconomic status, as well as your listeners' culture or language.

In the same way, when you prepare a speech in a business situation, do your homework. Access the company website, visit the location and get to know people, and even call members of the company to discuss your topic. The more information you can gather about your audience, the better you will be able to adapt and present an effective speech.

3. Adapting Language and Technical Terms

Define and describe the key terms for your audience as part of your speech, and substitute common terms for jargon wherever appropriate. Your audience will enjoy learning more about the topic and appreciate your consideration as you present your speech.

4. Using Outside Information

Even if you think you know everything there is to know about your topic, using outside sources will contribute depth to your speech, provide support for your main points, and even enhance your credibility as a speaker. There is nothing wrong with using outside information as long as you clearly cite your sources and do not present someone else's information as your own.

5. Presenting Information Ethically

Figure 10.1. Presenting information ethically.

A central but often unspoken expectation is that the speaker will be ethical. This means, fundamentally, that we perceive one another as human beings with common interests and needs, and that we attend to the needs of others as well as our own. An **ethical informative speaker** expresses respect for listeners by avoiding prejudiced comments against any group, and by being honest about the information presented, including information that may contradict the speaker's personal biases. The ethical speaker also admits it when they do not know something. The best salesperson recognizes that ethical communication is the key to success, as it builds a healthy relationship where the customer's needs are met, thereby meeting the salesperson's own needs. When presenting information ethically, you must consider the following:

Reciprocity

Reciprocity, or a relationship of mutual exchange and interdependence, is an important characteristic of a relationship, particularly between a speaker and the audience. You as the speaker will have certain expectations and roles, but dominating your audience will not encourage them to fulfill their roles in terms of participation and active listening. Communication involves give and take, and in a public speaking setting, where the communication may be perceived as "all to one," don't forget that the audience is also communicating in terms of feedback with you. You have a responsibility to attend to that feedback, and develop reciprocity with your audience. Without them, you don't have a speech.

Mutuality

Mutuality means that you search for common ground and understanding with the audience, establishing this space and building on it throughout the speech. This involves examining viewpoints other than your own, and taking steps to insure the speech integrates an inclusive, accessible format, rather than an ethnocentric one.

Nonjudgmentalism

The key to **nonjudgmentalism** is being impartial; this requires you to set aside your own biases, be open-minded, and to express your willingness to examine diverse perspectives. Your audience expects you to state the truth as you perceive it, with supporting and clarifying information to support your position, and to speak honestly. They also expect you to be open to their point of view and be able to negotiate meaning and understanding in a constructive way. Nonjudgmentalism may include taking the perspective that being different (or having different opinions), is not inherently bad, and that there is common ground to be found with each other.

Honesty

Honesty, or truthfulness, directly relates to trust, a cornerstone in the foundation of a relationship with your audience. Without it, the building (the relationship) would fall down. Without trust, a relationship will not open and develop the possibility of mutual understanding. You want to share information and the audience hopefully wants to learn from you. If you only choose the information that best supports your point, and ignore contrary or related data, you may turn your informative speech into a persuasive one with bias as a central feature.

Respect

Respect should be present throughout a speech, demonstrating the speaker's high esteem for the audience. **Respect** can be defined as an act of giving and displaying particular attention to the value you associate with someone or a group. Displays of respect include making time for conversation, not interrupting, and even giving appropriate eye contact during conversations.

Trust

Communication involves sharing and that requires trust. **Trust** means the ability to rely on the character or truth of someone, that what you say you mean and your audience knows it. Acknowledging trust and its importance in your relationship with the audience is the first step in focusing on this key characteristic.

Avoid Exploitation

Finally, when we speak ethically, we do not intentionally exploit one another. **Exploitation** means taking advantage or using someone else for one's own purposes. Perceiving a relationship with an audience as a means to an end, and only focusing on what you get out of it, will lead you to treat people as objects. The temptation to exploit others can be great in business situations, where a promotion, a bonus, or even one's livelihood are at stake.

Suppose you are a bank loan officer. Whenever a customer contacts the bank to inquire about applying for a loan, your job is to provide an informative presentation about the types of loans available, their rates and terms. If you are paid a commission based on the number of loans you make and their amounts and rates, wouldn't you be tempted to encourage them to borrow the maximum amount they can qualify for? Or perhaps to take a loan with confusing terms that will end up costing much more in fees and interest than the customer realizes? After all, these practices are within the law; aren't they just part of the way business is done? If you are an ethical loan officer, you realize you would be exploiting customers if you treated them this way. You know it is more valuable to uphold your long-term relationships with customers than to exploit them so that you can earn a bigger commission.

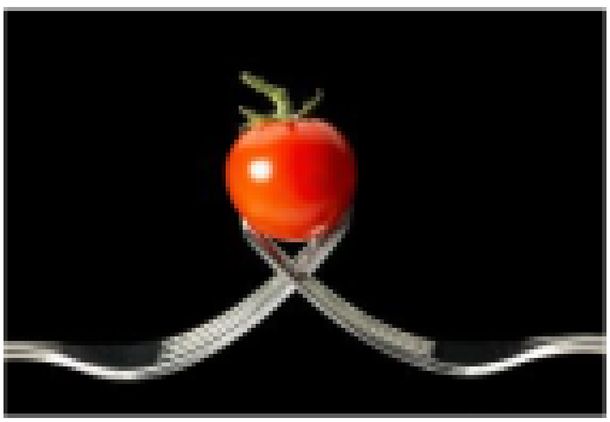
Consider these ethical principles when preparing and presenting your speech so you meet the natural expectations of your audience – in this way you will develop healthier, more effective, presentations and relationships.

Sample Informative Presentation

Here is a generic sample speech in outline form with notes and suggestions.

Attention Statement

Show a picture of a goldfish and a tomato and ask the audience, "What do these have in common?"



Introduction

1. Briefly introduce genetically modified foods.
2. State your topic and specific purpose: "My speech today will inform you on genetically modified foods that are increasingly part of our food supply."
3. Introduce your credibility and the topic: "My research on this topic has shown me that our food supply has changed but many people are unaware of the changes."
4. State your main points: "Today I will define genes, DNA, genome engineering and genetic manipulation, discuss how the technology applies to foods, and provide common examples."

Body

1. Information. Provide a simple explanation of the genes, DNA and genetic modification in case there are people who do not know about it. Provide clear definitions of key terms.
2. Genes and DNA. Provide arguments by generalization and authority.
3. Genome engineering and genetic manipulation. Provide arguments by analogy, cause, and principle.
4. Case study. In one early experiment, GM (genetically modified) tomatoes were developed with fish genes to make them resistant to cold weather, although this type of tomato was never marketed.
5. Highlight other examples.

Conclusion

1. Reiterate your main points and provide synthesis, but do not introduce new content.
2. State your residual message (what you want to audience to remember most). "Genetically modified foods are more common in our food supply than ever before."

In preparing an informative speech, use your knowledge and consider the audience's knowledge, avoid unnecessary jargon, give credit to your sources, and present the information ethically.

10.5 Creating an Informative Presentation

An informational presentation is a common request in business and industry. It's the verbal and visual equivalent of a written report. Informative presentations serve to present specific information, for specific audiences, for specific goals or functions. Table 10.1 below describes five main parts of a presentation to inform.

Table 10.1. Presentation Components and Their Functions. Lists the five main parts or components of any presentation (McLean, S., 2003).

Component	Function
Attention Statement	Raise interest and motivate the listener
Introduction	Communicate a point and common ground
Body	Address key points
Conclusion	Summarize key points
Residual Message	Communicate central theme, moral of story, or main point

Sample Speech Guidelines

Imagine that you have been assigned to give an informative presentation lasting five to seven minutes. Follow the guidelines in Table 10.2 below and apply them to your presentation.

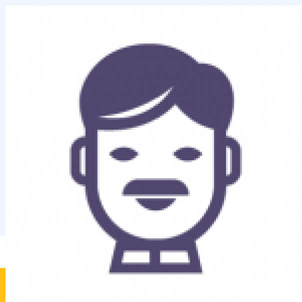
Table 10.2. Sample speech guidelines. Seven key items.

Topic	Choose a product or service that interests you (if you have the option of choice) and report findings in your speech. Even if you are assigned a topic, find an aspect or angle that is of interest to research.
Purpose	Your general purpose, of course, is to inform. But you need to formulate a more specific purpose statement that expresses a point you have to make about your topic—what you hope to accomplish in your speech.
Audience	Think about what your audience might already know about your topic and what they may not know, and perhaps any attitudes toward or concerns about it. Consider how this may affect the way that you will present your information.
Supporting Materials	Using the information gathered in your search for information, determine what is most worthwhile, interesting, and important to include in your speech. Time limits will require that you be selective about what you use. Use visual aids!
Organization	• Write a central idea statement that expresses the message, or point, that you hope to get across to your listeners in the speech. • Determine the two to three main points that will be needed to support your central idea. • Finally, prepare a complete sentence outline of the body of the speech.
Introduction	Develop an opening that will 1. get the attention and interest of your listeners, 2. express your central idea or message, 3. lead into the body of your speech.
Conclusion	The conclusion should review and/or summarize the important ideas in your speech and bring it to a smooth close.
Delivery	The speech should be delivered extemporaneously (not reading but speaking), using speaking notes and not reading from the manuscript. Work on maximum eye contact with your listeners. Use any visual aids or handouts that may be helpful.

Informative presentations illustrate, explain, describe, and instruct the audience on topics and processes.

10.6 Conclusion

Reflection Activity



After reading this chapter, and returning to Dhavit's challenge related to the development of an informational presentation on the environment, how might Dhavit ensure that he communicates his message to best inform his colleagues? How can he help ensure that his presentation is accurate and balanced? How might he avoid injecting his bias or personal opinions into the presentation?

Quick Quiz

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=195#h5p-29

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=195#h5p-30

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=195#h5p-31

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=195#h5p-32

Additional Resources

Great Canadian Speeches

Visit this site for a list informative topics for a business speech. Ideas for Informative Speech Topics for Business

Glossary

Attention Statement – raise interest and motivate the listener.

Beliefs – "habits of the mind" because we come to rely on them to make decisions.

Bias – an unreasoned or not-well-thought-out judgment.

Body – address key points.

Conclusion – summarize key points.

Describing – using information that requires emphasis on language that is vivid, captures attention, and excites the imagination.

Demonstrative Speech – focuses on clearly showing a process and telling the audience important details about each step so that they can imitate, repeat, or do the action themselves.

Ethical informative speaker – expresses respect for listeners by avoiding prejudiced comments against any group, and by being honest about the information presented, including information that may contradict the speaker's personal biases and admitting when they do not know something.

Exploitation – means taking advantage, using someone else's story or situation for your own purposes.

Exposition – a public exhibition or display, often expressing a complex topic in a way that makes the relationships and content clear.

Honesty – or truthfulness, directly relates to trust, a cornerstone in the foundation of a relationship with your audience.

Informative presentations – focus on helping the audience to understand a topic, issue, or technique more clearly.

Informative report – a speech where you organize your information around key events, discoveries, or technical data and provide context and illustration for your audience.

Interpretation – involves adapting the information to communicate a message, perspective, or agenda.

Introduction – communicate a point and common ground.

Mutuality – means that you search for common ground and understanding with the audience, establishing this space and building on it throughout the speech.

Nonjudgmentalism – underlines the need to be open-minded, an expression of one's willingness to examine diverse perspectives.

Objectivity – involves expressions and perceptions of facts that are free from distortion by your prejudices, bias, feelings or interpretations.

Reciprocity – a relationship of mutual exchange and interdependence.

Residual message – communicate the central theme or main point.

Respect – defined as an act of giving and displaying particular attention to the value you associate with someone or a group.

Subjectivity – expressions or perceptions that are modified, altered, or impacted by your personal bias, experiences, and background.

Trust – means the ability to rely on the character or truth of someone, that what you say you mean and your audience knows it.

Chapter References

Andrews, P. H., Andrews, J., & Williams, G. (1999). *Public speaking: Connecting you and your audience*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

CHAPTER 11: PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS

Chapter Preview

11.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

- Identify and demonstrate how to use six principles of persuasion.
- Describe similarities and differences between persuasion and motivation.
- Identify and demonstrate the effective use of five functions of speaking to persuade.
- Label and discuss three components of an argument.
- Identify and provide examples of emotional appeals.
- Demonstrate the importance of ethics as part of the persuasion process.

Professional Perspective

Dhavit is passionate about personal health and wellness and is planning on using his knowledge to develop a speech to help persuade some fellow colleagues to stop smoking cigarettes. As you read through this chapter, consider how Dhavit might adapt his planning and delivery to help persuade some of his colleagues to stop smoking.

No doubt there has been a time when you wanted to persuade someone to help you achieve a goal, or convince your manager about something at work, so you have likely spent time thinking about how you were going to present your request. Have you considered that many people—including people you have never met and never will meet—want something from *you*? When you watch television, advertisements compete for your attention, whether you watch them or not. When you use the internet, pop-up advertisements often appear. Most people are surrounded, even inundated, by persuasive messages; mass and social media have a significant effect on persuasive communication. This chapter is about how to communicate with persuasion and how to convince others to consider your point of view.

11.1 Principles of Persuasion

Persuasion is an act or process of presenting arguments to move, motivate, or change your audience. Persuasion can be implicit or explicit and can have both positive and negative effects. In this chapter the importance of ethics will continued to be reviewed, especially related to presenting motivational arguments to your audience so that they will consider your points, adopt your view, or change their behaviour.

Motivation is different from persuasion in that it involves the force, stimulus, or influence to bring about change. Persuasion is the process, and motivation is the compelling stimulus that encourages your audience to change their beliefs or behaviour, to adopt your position, or to consider your arguments.

Principles of Persuasion

What is the best way to succeed in persuading your listeners? There is no one "correct" answer, but many experts have studied persuasion and observed what works and what doesn't. Social psychologist Robert Cialdini (2006) offers us six principles of persuasion that are powerful and effective:

Image by geralt, Pixabay License

1. Reciprocity
2. Scarcity
3. Authority
4. Commitment and consistency
5. Consensus
6. Liking

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the mutual expectation for exchange of value or service. In many cultures, when one person gives something, the receiver is expected to reciprocate. If you are in customer service and go out of your way to meet the customer's need, you are appealing to the principle of reciprocity with the knowledge that all humans perceive the need to reciprocate—in this case, by increasing the likelihood of making a purchase from you or your organization because you were especially helpful. Reciprocity builds trust and the relationship develops, reinforcing everything from personal to brand loyalty. By taking the lead and giving, you build in a moment where people may feel compelled by social norms and customs to give back.

Scarcity

You want what you can't have, and it's universal. People are naturally attracted to the exclusive, the rare, the unusual, and the unique. If they are convinced that they need to act now or it will disappear, they are motivated to action. **Scarcity** is the perception of inadequate supply or a limited resource. For a sales representative, scarcity may be a key selling point—the particular car, or theatre tickets, or pair of shoes you are considering may be sold to someone else if you delay making a decision. By reminding customers not only of what they stand to gain but also of what they stand to lose, the representative increases the chances that the customer will make the shift from contemplation to action and decide to close the sale.

Authority

Trust is central to the purchase decision. Whom does a customer turn to? A salesperson may be part of the process, but an endorsement by an authority holds credibility. Knowledge of a product, field, trends in the field, and even research can make a salesperson more effective through the principle of **authority**. It may seem like extra work to educate your customers, but you need to reveal your expertise to gain credibility. Reading the manual of a product is not sufficient to gain expertise—you have to do extra homework. The principle of authority involves referencing experts and expertise.

Commitment and Consistency

People like to have consistency in what is said to them and in writing. Therefore, it is important that all commitments made are honoured at all times, and that what is presented by one person is consistent with that spoken or written by another.

Consensus

Testimonials, or first person reports on experience with a product or service, can be highly persuasive. People often look to each other when making a purchase decision, and the herd mentality is a powerful force across humanity. Leverage testimonials and positive reviews from clients to attract more clients by making them part of your team. The principle of consensus involves the tendency of the individual to follow the lead of the group.

Liking

We tend to be attracted to people who communicate to us that they like us, and who make us feel good about ourselves. Given a choice, these are the people with whom we are likely to associate. The principle of liking involves the perception of safety and belonging in communication.

To summarize, a persuasive message can succeed through the principles of reciprocity, scarcity, authority, commitment and consistency, consensus, and liking.

Watch the following 12 minute RSA animated video; *The Science of Persuasion*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=208#oembed-1

Video: Science of Persuasion by influenceatwork [11:50] *Transcript available*

11.2 Presentations that Persuade

Persuasive presentations have the following features, they:

Stimulate

When you focus on **stimulation** as the goal of your speech, you want to reinforce existing beliefs, intensify them, and bring them to the forefront. By presenting facts, you will reinforce existing beliefs, intensify them, and bring the issue to the surface. When your strategy is to stimulate, you might build your presentation on a foundation of common ground and commonly held beliefs, then introduce new information that a mainstream audience may not be aware of.

Convince

In a persuasive speech, the goal is to change the attitudes, beliefs, values, or judgments of your audience. Consider a prosecuting attorney trying to convince jury members that a defendant is guilty beyond reasonable doubt. He or she may discuss motive and present facts, all with the goal to convince the jury to believe that his or her argument is correct.

Audience members hold beliefs and are likely to have their own personal bias. When you are trying to convince your listeners, your goal is to get them to agree with your position; you will need to plan a range of points, data and examples to prompt audience members to consider your stance.

Include a Call to Action

Figure 11.1 below shows the “Reduce, reuse, recycle, repeat” slogan. The recycling movement is one of the most successful and persuasive call to action campaigns of the past twenty or more years in Canada (Babooram & Wang, 2007).

Figure 11.1. "Reduce-reuse-recycle-repeat" by Phil Gibbs, CC BY 4.0

When your presentation involves a **call to action** for your audience, you are indicating that your purpose is not to stimulate interest, reinforce and accentuate beliefs, or convince them of a viewpoint – you want your listeners to *do* something. The goal of your presentation is to change their behaviour in some way.

If you were a showroom salesperson at Toyota for example, your sales presentations might include the concept that the purchase of a Prius hybrid model is a call to action against issues of global warming related to fossil fuel consumption. The economics, even at current gas prices, might not completely justify the difference in price between a hybrid and a non-hybrid car. However, if you as a salesperson can make a convincing argument that choosing a hybrid car is the right and responsible decision, you may be more likely to get the customer to act. The persuasive speech that focuses on action often generates curiosity, clarifies a problem, and proposes a range of solutions. The key difference is that there is a clear link to action associated with the solutions.

Solutions lead us to considering the goals of action. These goals address the question, "What do I want the audience to do as a result of being engaged by my speech?" The **goals of action** include adoption, discontinuance, deterrence, and continuance.

Adoption means the speaker wants to persuade the audience to take on a new way of thinking, or adopt a new idea. Examples could include buying a new product or deciding to donate blood. The key is that the audience member adopts, or takes on, a new view, action, or habit.

Discontinuance involves the speaker persuading the audience to stop doing something what they have been doing. Rather than take on a new habit or action, the speaker is asking the audience member to stop an existing behaviour or idea.

Deterrence is a call to action that focuses on persuading the audience not to start something if they haven't already started. The goal of action would be to deter, or encourage the audience members to refrain from starting or initiating the behaviour.

Finally, with **continuance**, the speaker aims to persuade the audience to continue doing what they have been doing, such as to keep buying a product, participating in their daily dental routine, or staying in school to complete their education.

A speaker may choose to address more than one of these goals in a call to action, depending on the audience analysis. If the audience is largely agreeable and supportive, you may find continuance to be your primary goal, with adoption as a secondary target.

Goals in call to action presentations serve to guide you in the development of solution steps. Solution steps involve suggestions or ways the audience can take action after your speech. Audience members appreciate a strong discussion of the problem in a persuasive presentation, but they also appreciate clear solutions.

Increase Consideration

In a speech designed to increase consideration, you want to entice your audience to consider alternate viewpoints on the topic you have chosen. Audience members may hold views that are hostile in relation to yours, or perhaps they are neutral and simply curious about your topic. Returning to the Toyota salesperson example, you might be able to compare and contrast competing cars and show that the costs over ten years are quite similar. But the Prius has additional features that are the equivalent of a bonus, including high gas mileage. You might describe tax incentives for ownership, maintenance schedules and costs, and resale value. Your arguments and their support aim at increasing the audience's consideration of your position. You may not be asking for action in this presentation, but a corresponding increase of consideration may lead the customer to take action at a later date.

Develop Tolerance of Alternate Perspectives

Finally, you may want to help your audience develop tolerance of alternate perspectives and viewpoints. Perhaps your audience, as in the previous example, is interested in purchasing a car and you are the lead salesperson on that model. As you listen, and do your informal audience analysis, you may learn that horsepower and speed are important values to this customer. You might raise the issue of torque versus horsepower and indicate that the "uumph" you feel as you start a car off the line is torque. Many hybrid and even electric vehicles have great torque, as their systems involve fewer parts and less friction than a corresponding internal combustion-transaxle system. Your goal is to help your audience develop tolerance, but not necessarily acceptance, of alternate perspectives. By starting from common ground, and introducing a related idea, you are persuading your audience to consider an alternate perspective.

A persuasive speech may stimulate thought, convince, call to action, increase consideration, or develop tolerance of alternate perspectives.

11.3 Making An Argument

When people argue, they are engaged in conflict, and it's usually not pretty. It sometimes appears that way because people resort to fallacious arguments or false statements, or they simply do not treat each other with respect. They get defensive, try to prove their own point, and fail to listen to each other.

This is not what we want in a persuasive argument. Instead, when you make an argument in a persuasive speech, you will want to present your position with logical points, supporting each point with appropriate sources. You will want to give your audience every reason to perceive you as an ethical and trustworthy speaker. Your audience will expect you to treat them with respect, and to present your argument in a way that does not make them defensive. Contribute to your credibility by building sound arguments and using strategic arguments with skill and planning.

Stephen Toulmin's (1958) rhetorical strategy focuses on three main elements, shown in Table 11.1 as claim, data, and warrant.

Table 11.1 Rhetorical strategy.

Element	Description	Example
Claim	Your statement of belief or truth	It is important to spay or neuter your pet.
Data	Your supporting reasons for the claim	Millions of unwanted pets are euthanized annually.
Warrant	You create the connection between the claim and the supporting reasons	Pets that are spayed or neutered do not reproduce, preventing the production of unwanted animals.

This three-part rhetorical strategy is useful in that it makes the claim explicit, clearly illustrating the relationship between the claim and the data, and allows the listener to follow the speaker's reasoning. You may have a good idea or point, but your audience will be curious and want to know how you arrived at that claim or viewpoint. The warrant often addresses the inherent and often unspoken question, "Why is this data so important to your topic?" and helps you illustrate relationships between information for your audience. This model can help you clearly articulate a persuasive argument for your audience.

Appealing to Emotions

Emotions are a psychological and physical reaction, such as fear or anger, to stimuli that we experience as a feeling. Our feelings or emotions directly impact our own point of view and readiness to communicate, but also influence how, why, and when we say things. Emotions influence not only *how* you say what you say, but also how you hear, and *what* you hear. At times, emotions can be challenging to control. Emotions will move your audience, and possibly even move you, to change or act in certain ways.

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Be wary of overusing emotional appeals, or misusing emotional manipulation in presentations and communication. You may encounter emotional resistance from your audience. **Emotional resistance** involves getting tired, often to the point of rejection, of hearing messages that attempt to elicit an emotional response. Emotional appeals can wear out the audience's capacity to receive the message.

The use of an **emotional appeal** may also impair your ability to write persuasively or effectively. Be cautious about using a personal story, or even a story of someone you do not know, if the inclusion of that story causes you to lose control emotionally. While it's important to discuss relevant and sometimes emotionally difficult topics, you need to assess your own relationship to the message. While some emotional display may be warranted, and may increase your appeal to your audience, your presentation is not an exercise in therapy; you may sacrifice ethos and credibility, even your effectiveness, if you become angry or distraught because you are really not ready to discuss an issue you've selected.

Now that you've considered emotions and their role in a speech in general, and a speech to persuade specifically, it's important to recognize the principles of emotions in communication that serve you well when speaking in public. DeVito (2003) offers five key principles to acknowledge the role emotions play in communication and offer guidelines for their expression.

Emotions Are Universal

Emotions are a part of every conversation or interaction that you have. Whether or not you consciously experience them while communicating with yourself or others, they influence how you communicate. By recognizing that emotions are a component in all communication interactions, you can place emphasis on understanding both the content of the message and the emotions that influence how, why, and when the content is communicated.

Expression of emotions is important, but requires the three Ts: tact, timing, and trust. If you find you are upset and at risk of being less than diplomatic, or the timing is not right, or you are unsure about the level of trust, then consider whether you can effectively communicate your emotions. By considering these three Ts, you can help yourself express your emotions more effectively.

Emotions Are Communicated Verbally and Nonverbally

You communicate emotions not only through your choice of words but also through the manner in which you say those words. The words themselves communicate part of your message, but the nonverbal cues, including inflection, timing, space, and paralanguage can modify or contradict your spoken message. Be aware that emotions are expressed in both formats and pay attention to how your verbal and nonverbal messages reinforce and complement each other.

Emotional Expression Can Be Good and Bad

Expressing emotions can be a healthy activity to build trust in a relationship; trust can also be eroded if emotional expression is not combined with judgment. We're all different and we all experience emotions. How we express our emotions to ourselves and others can have a significant impact on our relationships. Expressing frustration in a speech may help an audience realize your point of view and see things as they have never seen them before, however expressing frustrations combined with blaming can generate defensiveness and decrease effective listening. When you're expressing yourself, consider the audience's point of view, be specific about your concerns, and emphasize that your relationship with your listeners is important to you.

Emotions Are Often Contagious

It is important to recognize that we influence each other with our emotions, both positively and negatively. As a speaker, your emotions can be contagious, so ensure you are enthusiastic enough to raise the level of interest in your topic. Conversely, you may be subject to "catching" emotions from your audience – if your audience is less than enthused, don't succumb to that energy – instead, draw on all your knowledge and skills, and use emotional appeals and persuasive tactics to help increase engagement!

In summary, everyone experiences emotions, and as a persuasive speaker, you can choose how to express emotion and appeal to the audience's emotions.

Elevator Speech

An elevator speech is to oral communication what a Twitter message (limited to 140 characters) is to written communication. An elevator speech is a presentation that persuades the listener in less than thirty seconds, or around a hundred words.

Creating an Elevator Speech

An elevator speech does not have to be a formal event, though it can be. An elevator speech is not a full sales pitch and should not get bloated with too much information. The idea is not to rattle off as much information as possible in a short time, nor to present a memorized thirty-second advertising message, but rather to give a relaxed and genuine "nutshell" summary of one main idea. The emphasis is on brevity, but a good elevator speech will address several key questions:

1. What is the topic, product or service?
2. Who are you?
3. Who is the target market? (if applicable)
4. What is the revenue model? (if applicable)
5. What or who is the competition and what are your advantages?

The following are the five key parts of your message:

- Attention Statement – Hook + information about you
- Introduction – What you offer
- Body – Benefits; what's in it for the listener
- Conclusion – Example that sums it up
- Residual Message – Call for action

Example Elevator Speech

Person you've just met: How are you doing?

You: I'm great, how are you? [ensure that your conversation partner feels the conversation is a two-way street and that they might be interested in hearing your elevator speech]

Person you've just met: Very well thanks, what brings you to this conference?

You: Glad you asked. I'm with (X Company) and we just received this new (product x)—it is amazing. It beats the competition hands down for a third of the price. Smaller, faster, and less expensive make it a winner. It's already a sales leader. Hey, if you know anyone who might be interested, call me! (Hands business card to the listener as visual aid). So what brings you to this conference? [be a good listener]

You often don't know when opportunity to inform or persuade will present itself, but with an elevator speech, you are prepared!

11.4 Speaking Ethically and Avoiding Fallacies

What comes to mind when you think of speaking to persuade? Perhaps the idea of persuasion may bring to mind propaganda and issues of manipulation, deception, intentional bias, bribery, and even coercion. Each element relates to persuasion, but in distinct ways. We can recognize that each of these elements in some ways has a negative connotation associated with it. Why do you think that deceiving your audience, bribing a judge, or coercing people to do something against their wishes is wrong? These tactics violate our sense of fairness, freedom, and ethics.

Manipulation involves the management of facts, ideas or points of view to one's own advantage in order to influence or control another. Your audience expects you to treat them with respect, and deliberately manipulating them by means of fear, guilt, duty, or a relationship is unethical.

In the same way, **deception** involves the use of lies, partial truths, or the omission of relevant information to mislead your audience. No one likes to be lied to, or made to believe something that is not true. Deception can involve intentional bias, or the selection of information to support your position while negatively framing any information that might challenge your belief.

Bribery involves the giving of something in return for an expected favour, consideration, or privilege. It circumvents the normal protocol for personal gain, and is a strategy that is generally considered unethical if not illegal.

Coercion is the use of power to compel action. You make someone do something they would not choose to do freely. While you may raise the issue that the ends justify the means, and you are "doing it for the audience's own good," recognize the unethical nature of coercion.

Eleven Points for Speaking Ethically

In his book *Ethics in Human Communication* Johannesen (1996) offers eleven points to consider when speaking to persuade. His main points reiterate many of the points across this chapter and should be kept in mind as you prepare, and present, your persuasive message.

Do not:

1. use false, fabricated, misrepresented, distorted, or irrelevant evidence to support arguments or claims
2. intentionally use unsupported, misleading, or illogical reasoning
3. represent yourself as informed or an "expert" on a subject when you are not
4. use irrelevant appeals to divert attention from the issue at hand
5. ask your audience to link your idea or proposal to emotion-laden values, motives, or goals to which it is actually not related

6. deceive your audience by concealing your real purpose, by concealing self-interest, by concealing the group you represent, or by concealing your position as an advocate of a viewpoint
7. distort, hide, or misrepresent the number, scope, intensity, or undesirable features of consequences or effects
8. use "emotional appeals" that lack a supporting basis of evidence or reasoning.
9. oversimplify complex, gradation-laden situations into simplistic, two-valued, either-or, polar views or choices
10. pretend certainty where tentativeness and degrees of probability would be more accurate
11. advocate something which you yourself do not believe in

In your speech to persuade, consider honesty and integrity as you assemble your arguments. Your audience will appreciate your thoughtful consideration of more than one view, your understanding of the complexity, and you will build your ethos, or credibility, as you present your document. Be careful not to stretch the facts, or assemble them only to prove yourself, and instead prove the argument on its own merits. Deception, coercion, intentional bias, manipulation, and bribery should have no place in your speech to persuade.

Avoiding Fallacies

Fallacies are another way of saying false logic. These tricks deceive your audience with their style, drama, or pattern, but add little to your speech in terms of substance and can actually detract from your effectiveness. In Table 11.2 below, eight classical fallacies are described. Learn to recognize these fallacies so they can't be used against you, and so that you can avoid using them with your audience.

Table 11.2 Eight fallacies

Fallacy	Definition	Example
1. Red Herring	Any diversion intended to distract attention from the main issue, particularly by relating the issue to a common fear.	It's not just about the death penalty; it's about the victims and their rights. You wouldn't want to be a victim, but if you were, you'd want justice.
2. Straw Man	A weak argument set up to be easily refuted, distracting attention from stronger arguments	What if we released criminals who commit murder after just a few years of rehabilitation? Think of how unsafe our streets would be then!
3. Begging the Question	Claiming the truth of the very matter in question, as if it were already an obvious conclusion.	We know that they will be released and unleashed on society to repeat their crimes again and again.
4. Circular Argument	The proposition is used to prove itself. Assumes the very thing it aims to prove. Related to begging the question.	Once a killer, always a killer.
5. Ad Populum	Appeals to a common belief of some people, often prejudicial, and states everyone holds this belief. Also called the Bandwagon Fallacy, as people "jump on the bandwagon" of a perceived popular view.	Most people would prefer to get rid of a few "bad apples" and keep our streets safe.
6. Ad Hominem	"Argument against the man" instead of against his message. Stating that someone's argument is wrong solely because of something about the person rather than about the argument itself.	Our representative is a drunk and philanderer. How can we trust him on the issues of safety and family?
7. Non Sequitur	"It does not follow." The conclusion does not follow from the premises. They are not related.	Since the liberal anti-war demonstrations of the 1960s, we've seen an increase in convicts who got let off death row.
8. Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc	"After this, therefore because of this," also called a coincidental correlation. It tries to establish a cause-and-effect relationship where only a correlation exists.	Violent death rates went down once they started publicizing executions.

Avoid false logic and make a strong case or argument for your proposition. Finally, here is a five-step motivational checklist to keep in mind as you bring it all together:

1. Get their attention
2. Identify the need
3. Satisfy the need
4. Present a vision or solution
5. Take action

This simple organizational pattern can help you focus on the basic elements of a persuasive message when time is short and your performance is critical. Speaking to persuade should not involve manipulation, coercion, false logic, or other unethical techniques.

11.5 Conclusion

Reflection Activity

After reading this chapter, and returning to Dhavit's challenge related to creating a persuasive presentation, how might Dhavit plan and deliver his information to help persuade some of his colleagues to stop smoking?

Quick Quiz

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=221#h5p-33*

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: *https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=221#h5p-34*

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=221#h5p-35

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=221#h5p-36

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=221#h5p-37

Additional Resources

Visit this site for a video and other resources about Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Best Essay Topic Examples on Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) provides a guide to persuasive speaking strategies. Purdue OWL

Visit the CBC Podcasts page and assess the persuasive message of various programs. CBC Podcasts

Glossary

Adoption – means the speaker wants to persuade the audience to take on a new way of thinking, or adopt a new idea.

Authority – involves referencing experts and expertise.

Bribery – involves the giving of something in return for an expected favour, consideration, or privilege.

Call to action – you want your listeners to do something, to change their behaviour in some way.

Claim – your statement of belief or truth when making an evidence-based argument.

Coercion – the use of power to compel action.

Commitment and Consistency – means ensuring that you follow through on what you say you will do.

Consensus – is the tendency of the individual to follow the lead of the group or peers.

Continuance – the speaker aims to persuade the audience to continue doing what they have been doing, such as keep buying a product, or staying in school to get an education.

Data – your supporting reasons for a claim when you are making an evidence-based argument.

Deception – involves the use of lies, partial truths, or the omission of relevant information to deceive your audience.

Deterrence – call to action that focuses on persuading audience not to start something if they haven't already started.

Discontinuance – involves the speaker persuading the audience to stop doing something they have been doing.

Emotional appeal – using emotions to move your audience.

Emotional resistance – getting tired, often to the point of rejection, of hearing messages that attempt to elicit an emotional response.

Fallacies – another way of saying false logic. These tricks deceive your audience with their style, drama, or pattern, but add little to your speech in terms of substance and can actually detract from your effectiveness.

Goals of action (solutions) – include adoption, discontinuance, deterrence, and continuance.

Liking – involves the perception of safety and belonging in communication.

Manipulation – involves the management of facts, ideas or points of view to one's own advantage in order to influence or control another.

Motivation – different from persuasion in that it involves the force, stimulus, or influence to bring about change.

Persuasion – an act or process of presenting arguments to move, motivate, or change your audience.

Reciprocity – is the mutual expectation for exchange of value or service.

Scarcity – is the perception of inadequate supply or a limited resource.

Stimulation – reinforce existing beliefs, intensify them, and bring them to the forefront.

Testimonials – first person reports on experience with a product or service.

Warrant – you create the connection between a claim and supporting reasons when making an evidence-based argument.

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CHAPTER 12: MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

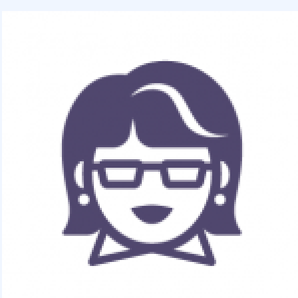
Chapter Summary

12.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

- Describe features of a poorly-facilitated group meeting.
- Identify guidelines for facilitating a meeting effectively.
- Discuss steps for facilitating virtual meetings.
- Identify ways in which parliamentary procedure can help a group conduct its business effectively.
- Describe terminology related to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (RONR) and related summaries of parliamentary procedure.
- Identify a tool for recording and preserving notes of professional group conversations.
- Acquire a format for minutes which emphasizes actions taken by a group and the people assigned to accomplish them.
- Identify three ways in which a good group leader should follow up on meetings of the group.

Professional Perspective



It is Monday morning and Naiomi opens her calendar for the week and notices that the majority of her time is scheduled for meetings. She is working on a major campaign that is due at the end of the month and needs time to complete the tasks required. She is overwhelmed as she does not see how that is possible with all the meetings scheduled. She is also dreading one particular meeting, as she knows it is a waste of her time. The group has no direction, and it does not seem to Naiomi that anything is ever accomplished.

If meetings are so central to what groups do, but are so time-consuming, it makes sense to pay attention to how they're conducted. Like any other course of action, the process of engaging in meetings has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In our first section we'll consider the beginning—the planning part. Later we'll look at techniques for facilitating a meeting, the use of *Robert's Rules of Order*, and the best ways to follow up after a meeting.

Whether and how carefully you plan any undertaking will determine in large part how well it turns out. Bad planning makes it harder to achieve your goals; good planning makes it easier. This certainly applies to meetings of groups, so it's wise for us to examine how to plan those meetings effectively. Before we consider the ins and outs of that planning, however, let's reflect on the proper role of meetings.

12.1 Planning a Meeting

Whether in educational settings, business, or other organizations, meetings dominate the way many groups operate. One authority claims that the average chief executive officer spends 17 hours per week in meetings, whereas the average senior executive spends 23 hours per week (Amos, 2002).

If the average number of people in each of these meetings is only five, and the average meeting lasts only one hour, this means that between 55,000,000 and 150,000,000 person-hours each day are being consumed by meetings. Assuming a 50-week work year, then, the total time devoted to meetings each year amounts to at least fifteen billion person-hours. As for you, yourself, one estimate is that you'll spend 35–50% of every workweek in meetings, for a total of more than 9,000 hours over the course of your lifetime (Doyle & Straus, 1993).

What Are Meetings for?

Office equipment and supplies constitute tools to support the work of most modern groups such as student teams in college classes, employees and executives in businesses, and collections of people in other organizations. None of those groups would say that using copy machines and staplers is one of their goals. – and none of them would visit a copy machine unless they had something they needed to reproduce. They wouldn't grab a stapler, either, unless they had some papers to attach to each other.

Meetings resemble office supplies in at least one way: they can help a group accomplish its goals. But, like office supplies, meetings are only a means toward reaching group goals…not the goal itself. Sometimes they even stand in the way of efficiently functioning groups. One statistical analysis of workers' reactions to meetings discovered a significant positive relationship between the number of meetings attended and both the level of fatigue and the sensation of being subjected to a heavy work load (Luong & Rogelberg, 2005).

Remember that if it is operating well, your group probably adopted goals for itself at some point; it may even have ranked those goals in order of importance. Members of a student team might, for example, decide that their joint goals are to earn a high grade on their group project, to have fun together, and to ensure that all of them can secure a positive recommendation from the instructor when they look for a job after graduation.

"To meet" is not one of the goals of any group. Your goals involve doing things, not meeting—not even meeting to decide what you're going to do and whether you're actually doing it. You should not be holding meetings until and unless doing so will clearly contribute to a real goal of your group.

What this means in practical reality is that many, many regularly-scheduled meetings probably ought to be cancelled, postponed, or at the very least substantially shortened. It means that meetings which aren't part of an official, ongoing series should be conducted *only* if the people who would be participating agree that having the meetings is necessary to answer a question, solve a problem, make a decision, or ensure that people know what it is they are and should be doing. It means, in short, that a group's "default position" should be to *not* have meetings.

If you're in a position to decide whether and when a meeting will take place, you're in control of what some might consider other people's most valuable possession: their time. If you take this responsibility seriously and act on it wisely, your fellow group members will appreciate it—especially since many group leaders do not.

To Meet or Not to Meet

In the twenty-first century, technology offers techniques for accomplishing many group goals without meeting face to face. A helpful website called Lifehacker suggests that you follow these steps before scheduling in-person meetings:

- Get done what you can by email. If email doesn't accomplish your aims, use the telephone. Only if neither email nor the phone works should you meet face to face.
- Calculate the *opportunity cost* of a potential meeting. What task(s) that you could be engaged in at the time of the meeting will you have to postpone, or forgo entirely, because of the meeting? Is it worth it?
- Ask yourself what bad results, if any, will come to pass if you don't meet. What about if you don't meet this time, but later instead? If the bad things you expect to arise without a meeting are minimal, or can be dealt with easily, don't meet – or at least not now.
- Ask if it's essential for everyone in the group to be at the same physical location at the time of the meeting. Assess whether the chore of just moving people's molecules from one place to another could render a face-to-face meeting undesirable (Babauta, 2007).

We live in a day and age where most meetings can be carried out online, however, there is something to be said for at least one initial in-person meeting so that team members can have some social interaction and get to know one another better. This helps teams to "gel" and can increase collaboration.

If It's "to Meet," Then What?

Once you've decided that you should hold a meeting of some sort, you should do your best to make sure it will run well. Part of this undertaking is to ensure that all the members of your group understand the significance of the time they'll be devoting to getting together. To this end, you may want to create a list of basic obligations you feel everyone should fulfill with respect to all meetings. These obligations might include the following items:

- If you can't make it to a meeting, let the person who's organizing it know in a timely fashion. If you were expected to make a report or complete a task of some sort by the time of the meeting, either submit the report through

someone else who will be there or inform the organizer of when you'll finish what you're committed to be doing. If you can find someone to fill in for you at the meeting, do it.
- If you can attend the meeting, prepare for it. Read meeting announcements and agendas. Take necessary and appropriate information and tools with you to each meeting. Come to meetings with an open mind and with a mental picture of what you may contribute to the discussion.
- Pay attention. Avoid side conversations or other actions that might keep you from understanding what's going on in a meeting.
- Be clear, concise and as brief as possible. Don't speak unless you're sure you'll improve over silence by doing so.
- Wait to express your own opinion until you're sure you understand others' views.
- Challenge assumptions, but stick to the topic and offer constructive rather than destructive criticism.
- Know when to give in on a matter of disagreement. Stick to your convictions, but consider carefully whether you need to have your way in any particular situation.

Guidelines for Planning a Meeting

Again, first of all: don't meet at all unless you need to. Once you've determined that a meeting will promote rather than hinder productivity, preparing for it well will give you a head start on maximizing its effectiveness. Here are six guidelines to take into account as you plan a meeting:

1. *Identify the specific goals.* Spell out exactly what you want to achieve in the meeting and the methods you'll use to decide if you've achieved them. Write the goals down. Reread them. Let them sit a while. Read them again to see if they're still appropriate and necessary.

   If the goals of the meeting still look as though they're all valuable, remember Dwight Eisenhower's dictum that what is important is seldom urgent, and what is urgent is seldom importan[1]. If you're not sure you can get everything done that you hope to in the time you'll have available, set priorities so that the most urgent items are taken care of quickly, and you can postpone others without endangering what's most important to get done.

2. *Decide carefully who needs to attend.* At one point, Amazon Corporation implemented a "*two-pizza guideline*" whereby it limited the number of people who composed its teams to the quantity that could be fed with two pizzas (Deutschman, 2004). If you calculate that the people you plan to invite to your meeting constitute larger than a two-pizza group, ask yourself if all of them really, really, really need to be there.

3. *Produce a clear, brief, thorough, informative agenda.* Don't spring surprises on people. To give them a solid idea of what to expect, divide the meeting's agenda into simple categories: for instance, establishment of a quorum; approval of minutes and the agenda; officers' and (sub)committee reports; unfinished business; new business, and "other." For each item, name the individual in charge of it, indicate whether it will require action by the group, and provide an estimated duration. (You'll need to confirm these estimates with the responsible parties,

1. t (MindTools Content Team, n.d.)

of course). If you expect some or all of the group's members to complete a task before they arrive, such as reading a report or generating possible solutions to a problem, tell them so clearly.

Here's a special note, too: Don't plan to stretch the contents of a meeting to fit a preordained time. Strive to cut down on how long you spend to handle each item on your agenda as much as you can so that members of your group can get back to their other responsibilities as soon as possible. A shorter-than-expected meeting is usually a thing of joy.

4. *Pick a good venue.* If you have a choice, plan to gather in a place with plenty of light, comfortable furniture, and a minimum of distracting sounds or sights. You should be able to adjust the temperature if people get too hot or cold. Make sure that any technological tools you think will be available to you are actually going to be on hand when you meet and that they're all functioning properly. Even if you expect to have access to a laptop computer and a projector, plan to bring a flip chart and markers so that people will be able to express and record ideas spontaneously during the meeting. If you can, find a place to meet regularly which is large enough and secure enough to allow your group members to store the "tools of their trade" there—flipcharts, writing supplies, reference books, etc.—between gatherings. Given the preceding information, online meetings can help simplify the process, although technology can have issues of its own. Be sure you have someone assisting who is able to deal with any technological issues, monitor the chat, etc. while others are speaking.

5. *Make sure the participants receive the agenda.* Make sure people receive the agenda you've prepared in a timely fashion so they'll know why, when, where, and for how long the group is expected to meet. Two reminders per meeting may be enough, but three are better, including one the day before the meeting itself and one the day of. If your organization is using Outlook this is easily managed by the calendar, but there are many free computer-based confidential text-messaging services such as Class Parrot and kikutext which provide other channels to reach group members.

   One college president from a Southern state maintained that he'd gotten his board of trustees to act "like trained seals," partly through thorough preparation for their meetings. In fact, the president actually ran practice meetings with the board to make sure there would be no surprises when the real meetings took place.

   If you're planning to meet in a place for the first time, or if you're expecting someone to attend your meeting for the first time, be sure to provide clear and complete directions to the location. With online tools such as google maps and mapquest.com at your disposal, it should cost you very little time to locate such directions and send them to members of your group.

6. *Arrive early.* Arrive early to size up and set up the place where you're meeting. Rooms sometimes get double-booked, furniture sometimes gets rearranged, technological tools such as LCD projectors and laptop computers sometimes break down or get taken away to be repaired, and so on. If you're the person in charge of leading the meeting, you need to know first if unexpected happenings like these have taken place. For online meetings, it's nice to be online and ready so attendees are not waiting "outside" for you to get started. Be sure to allow people to enter automatically or have someone else monitoring the waiting room so that even those who join late have quick access.

Following these half-dozen guidelines won't guarantee that your meetings will be as successful as you wish them to be. If you don't heed them, however, you're apt to encounter considerable difficulty in achieving that aim.

Meetings should be avoided unless they are clearly necessary, but preparing for them well can enable a group to advance its objectives.

12.2 Facilitating a Meeting

Preparing for group meetings well takes you a third of the way toward ensuring their productivity, and follow-up takes care of another third. The middle third of the process is to run the meetings efficiently.

Make no mistake: facilitating a meeting well is difficult. It requires care, vigilance, flexibility, resilience, humility, and humour. In a way, in fact, to run a meeting effectively calls upon you to act the way a skilled athletic coach does, watching the action, calling plays, and encouraging good performance. Furthermore, you need to monitor the interaction of everyone around you and "call the plays" based on a game plan that you and your fellow group members have presumably agreed upon in advance. Finally, like a coach, you sometimes need to call timeouts—breaks—when people are weary or the action is starting to get raggedy or undisciplined.

A Meeting Heroine

We will list and explain several principles and practices of good meeting facilitation in this section, but first let's consider a friend and colleague of ours named Bonnie. Bonnie is the best meeting facilitator we've ever met, for several reasons. First of all, she makes it a point to become familiar with not only the issues and topics to be dealt with in a meeting, but also the personalities, strengths, and foibles of the other people who will be participating. Although she behaves in a warm and friendly manner at all times during a meeting, she never veers off into extraneous or superfluous details just for the sake of being sociable.

Because she attends closely to every interaction in a meeting and takes the time in advance to become familiar with the styles and proclivities of participants, Bonnie prevents discussions from getting off track. In fact, she has an uncanny knack of being able to spot a train of discussion that might even just be getting ready to go off track so that she can nudge it safely around bends and down slippery slopes. Furthermore, she seems to always know exactly what questions to ask, and to whom, to elicit concise, purposeful information which helps the group keep moving in the proper direction.

Bonnie is totally efficient and systematic in her pacing and wastes no time from the moment a meeting begins to the moment it ends…or afterward, either. If you go to a meeting led by Bonnie and its purpose is to plan an event—an Arbor Day celebration, for example, since that's a project she oversees every year in the town where she lives—you can be confident of the outcome. When the meeting ends, the event will be planned and you will be feeling good about yourself, about the meeting itself, and about the future of the group.

Perils of Poor Facilitation

Unfortunately, many people lack the skills of our friend Bonnie. As a result, a variety of negative results can take place as they fail to act capably as meeting facilitators. Here are some signs of trouble in a meeting:

- An argument starts about an established fact.
- Opinions are introduced as if they were truths.
- People intimidate others with real or imaginary “knowledge.”
- People overwhelm each other with too many proposals for the time available to consider them.
- People become angry for no good reason.
- People promote their own visions at the expense of everyone else’s.
- People demand or offer much more information than is needed.
- Discussion becomes circular; people repeat themselves without making any progress toward conclusions.

If you’ve experienced any of these symptoms of a poorly-facilitated meeting, you realize how demoralizing they can be for a group.

Guidelines for Facilitating a Meeting

Barge (1991), Lumsden & Lumsden (2004), and Parker & Hoffman (2006) are among many authorities who have recommended actions and attitudes which can help you facilitate a meeting well. Here are several such suggestions, taken partly from these writers’ works and partly from the authors’ experiences as facilitators and participants in meetings over the years:

1. *Start promptly…always.*

   Calculate the cost to your group—even at minimum-wage rates—for the minutes its members sit around waiting for meetings to begin. You may occasionally be delayed for good reasons, but if you’re chronically late you’ll eventually aggravate folks who’ve arrived on time—the very ones whose professionalism you’d particularly like to reinforce and praise. Consistently starting on time may even boost morale: “Early in, early out” will probably appeal to most group members since they are likely to have other things they need to do as soon as a meeting ends.

2. *Begin with something positive.*

   Face it: no matter what you do, many people in your group would probably rather be somewhere else than in a meeting. If you’d like them to overcome this familiar aversion and get pumped up about what you’ll be doing, you may want to emulate the practice of City Year, a Boston-based nonprofit international service organization. City Year begins its meetings by inviting members to describe from their own recent life experiences an example of what

Robert F. Kennedy referred to as a "ripple of hope" ([1]This could be a good deed they've seen someone do for someone else, a news item about a decline in the crime rate, or perhaps even a loving note they've received from a child or other family member. Sharing with their fellow group members such examples of altruism, love, or community improvement focuses and motivates City Year members by reminding them in specific, personal terms of why their meetings can be truly worthwhile.

3. *Tend to housekeeping details.*

   People's productivity depends in part on their biological state. Once you convene your meeting, announce or remind the group members of where they can find rest rooms, water fountains, vending machines, designated smoking areas, and any other amenities that may contribute to their physical comfort.

4. *Make sure people understand their roles.*

   At the start of the meeting, review what you understand is going to happen and ask for confirmation of what you think people are expected to do in the time you're going to be spending together. Calling on someone to make a report if he or she isn't aware it's required can be embarrassing for both you and that person.

5. *Keep to your agenda.*

   Social time makes people happy and relieves stress. Most group meetings, however, should not consist primarily of social time. You may want to designate a "*sheriff*"—rotating the role at each meeting—to watch for departures from the agenda and courteously direct people back on task. Either you or the "sheriff" might want to periodically provide "*signposts*" indicating where you are in your process, too, such as "It looks like we've got 25 minutes left in our meeting, and we haven't discussed yet who's going to be working on the report to give to Mary."

   If your meetings habitually exceed the time you allot for them, consider either budgeting more time or, if you want to stick to your guns, setting a kitchen timer to ring when you've reached the point when you've said you'll quit. The co-founder of one technology firm, Jeff Atwood, put together a list of rules for his company's meetings which included this one: "No meeting should ever be more than an hour, under penalty of death" (Attwood, 2012, para. 7). [2]Similarly, the library staff at one college in the Midwest conducts all their meetings standing up in a circle, which encourages brevity and efficiency.

6. *Guide, don't dictate.*

   If you're in charge of the meeting, that doesn't mean you're responsible for everything people say in it, nor does it mean you have to personally comment on every idea or proposal that comes up. Let the other members of the group carry the content as long as they're not straying from the process you feel needs to be followed.

   You may see that some people regularly dominate discussion in your group's meetings and that others are perhaps slower to talk despite having important contributions to make. One way to deal with these disparities is by providing the group with a "talking stick" and specifying that people must hold it in their hands in order to speak. You could also invoke the "NOSTUESO rule" with respect to the talking stick, which says that "No One Speaks Twice Until Everybody Speaks Once."

7. *Keep your eyes open for nonverbal communication.*

   As a meeting progresses, people's physical and emotional states are likely to change. As the facilitator, you should

1. Grossman, 1998).
2.

do your best to identify such change and accommodate it within the structures and processes your group has established for itself. When people do something as simple as crossing their arms in front of them, for instance, they might be signalling that they're closed to what others are saying—or they might just be trying to stay warm in a room that feels too cold to them.

When one person in the meeting has the floor and is talking, it's a good idea to watch how the rest of the group seems to be responding. You may notice clues indicating that people are pleased and receptive, or that they're uninterested, skeptical, or even itching to respond negatively. You may want to do a *perception check* to see if you're interpreting nonverbal cues accurately. For instance, you might say, "Terry, could we pause here a bit? I get the impression that people might have some questions for you." As an alternative, you might address the whole group and ask "Does anyone have questions for Terry at this point?"

8. *Capture and assign action items.*

   Unless they are held purely to communicate information, or for other special purposes, most meetings result in action items, tasks, and other assignments for one or more participants. Sometimes these items arise unexpectedly because someone comes up with a great new idea and volunteers or is assigned to pursue it after the discussion ends. Be on the alert for these elements of a meeting.

9. *Make things fun and healthy.*

   Appeal to people's tummies and funny bones. Provide something to eat or drink, even if it's just coffee or peanuts in a bowl. Glenn Parker and George Hoffman's book on how to run meetings well includes a chapter titled "Eating Well=Meeting Well," and it also refers to the fact that the [American Cancer Society]() offers a program to help groups organize meetings and other events with good health in mind (Parker & Hoffman, 2006).

10. *Avoid sarcasm and cynicism.*

    Encourage humour and merriment. If your agenda includes some challenging items, try to start out with "*quick wins*" to warm the mood of the group.

11. *Take breaks regularly, even when you think you don't need them.*

    If you've ever gone on a long hike on a beautiful day, you may have decided to continue a mile or two beyond your original intended destination because the scenery was beautiful and you were feeling spunky. If you're like the authors, though, you probably regretted "going the extra mile" later because it meant you had to go back that mile plus all the rest of the way you'd come.

    Something similar can arise in a meeting. People sometimes feel full of energy and clamour to keep a lively discussion going past the time scheduled for a break, but they may not realize that they're tiring and losing focus until someone says or does something ill-advised. Taking even five-minute breathers at set intervals can help group members remain physically refreshed over the long haul.

12. *Show respect for everyone.*

    Seek consensus. Avoid "groupthink" by encouraging a free and full airing of opinions. Observe the Golden Rule. Listen sincerely to everyone, but avoid giving a small minority so much clout that in disputed matters "99-to-1 is a tie." Keep disagreements agreeable. If you must criticize, criticize positions, not people. If someone's behaviour shows a pattern of consistently irritating others or disrupting the flow of your group's meetings, talk to the person privately and express your concern in a polite but clear fashion. Be specific in stating what you expect the person to do or stop doing, and keep an open mind to whatever response you receive.

13. *Expect the unexpected.*

    Do your best to anticipate and prepare for confrontations and conflicts. If you didn't already make time to do so earlier, take a minute just before the start of the meeting to mark items on your agenda which you think might turn out to be especially contentious or time-consuming.

14. *Conduct multiple assessments of the meeting.*

    Formative assessment takes place during an activity and allows people to modify their behaviour in response to its results. Why not perform a brief interim evaluation during every meeting in which you ask, for instance, "If we were to end this meeting right now, where would it be, and if we need to make changes now in what's happening in our meeting, what should they be?"

    Summative assessment is implemented at the end of an activity. When you finish a meeting, for example, you might check to see how well people feel that the gathering met its intended goals. If you want something in writing, you might distribute a half sheet of paper to each person asking "What was best about our meeting?" and "What might have made this meeting better?" Or you could write two columns on a whiteboard, one with a plus and the other with a minus, and ask people orally to identify items they think belong in each category. If you feel a less formal check-up is sufficient, you might just go around the table or room and ask every person for one word that captures how she or he feels.

15. *Think (and talk) ahead.*

    If you didn't write it on your agenda—which would have been a good idea, most likely—remind group members, before the meeting breaks up, of where and when their next gathering is to take place.

Tips For Virtual Meetings

Meetings conducted via Skype or other synchronous technological tools can function as efficiently as face-to-face ones, but only if the distinctive challenges of the virtual environment are taken into account. It's harder to develop empathy with other people, and easier to engage in unhelpful multitasking, when you're not in the same physical space with them. To make it more likely that a virtual meeting will be both pleasant and productive, then, it makes sense to tell people up front what your expectations are of their behaviour. If you want them to avoid reading email or playing computer solitaire on their computers while the meeting is underway, for example, say so.

A major goal of most meetings is to reach decisions based on maximum involvement, so it pays to keep in mind that people work best with other people whom they know and understand. With this in mind, you might choose to email a photo of each person scheduled to be in the meeting and include a quick biography for everyone to look over in advance. This communication could take place along with disseminating the meeting's agenda and other supporting documentation.

Here are some further tips and suggestions for leading or participating in virtual meetings, each based on the unique features of such gatherings:

1. Get all the participants in an audio meeting to say something brief at the start of the meeting so that everyone becomes familiar with everyone else's voice.
2. Remind people of the purpose of the meeting and of the key outcome(s) you hope to achieve together.
3. Listen/watch for people who aren't participating and ask them periodically if they have thoughts or suggestions to add to the discussion.
4. Summarize the status of the meeting from time to time.
5. If you're holding an audio conference, discourage people from calling in on a cell phone because of potential problems with sound quality.
6. Because you may not have nonverbal cues to refer to, ask other members to clarify their meanings and intentions if you're not sure their words alone convey all you need to know.
7. If you know you're going to have to leave a meeting before it ends, inform the organizer in advance. Sign off publicly, but quickly, when you leave rather than just hanging up on the meeting connection.

Facilitating a meeting well requires a large number of skills and talents and depends on overcoming many potential pitfalls, but following specific recommendations from authorities on the subject can make it possible.

12.3 A Brief Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order

In the previous two sections, we considered a number of practical planning, human relations, and communication guidelines to help you get ready for a meeting and facilitate it. Now we'll discuss a system of formal rules called "*parliamentary procedure*" which you may follow as you facilitate a meeting to save lots of time, prevent ill feelings, promote harmony, and ensure that everyone's viewpoints can be expressed and discussed democratically.

Why Parliamentary Procedure?

It's easy to make fun of individuals or groups who follow procedures "to the letter," especially in a countries like Canada and the United States where we say that we prize spontaneity and self-determination. When it comes to most groups you work in or lead as a student or employee, you'll probably be able to get away with conducting the meetings fairly informally, or even "by the seat of your pants." In such groups—"among friends," as it were—parliamentary procedure may seem boring or unnecessary. You may just assume, for instance, that you'll observe the will of the majority in cases of disagreement and that you'll keep track of what you do by taking a few simple notes when you get together.

But what about when you're asked to chair your children's PTA some day? Or when you're elected president of a community service group like Kiwanis or Rotary? Or when you become an officer in a professional society? Under those circumstances, you'll have entered a "deliberative assembly"—a body that considers options and reaches decisions—and you'll benefit from knowing at least the rudiments of parliamentary procedure in order to fulfill your duties. When you're in charge of running such a group's meetings, you should be able to ensure that things run smoothly, efficiently, and fairly. As odd as it sounds, under those circumstances you'll probably actually find that imposing regulation on the group is necessary to preserve its freedom to act.

On a very practical level, parliamentary procedure can help you answer these common, important questions as you lead a meeting:

- Who gets to speak when, and for how long?
- What do we do if our discussion seems to be going on and on without any useful results?
- When and how do we make decisions?
- What do we do if we're not ready yet to say yes or no to a proposal but need to move on to something else in the meantime?
- What do we do if we change our minds?

Learning something about parliamentary procedure provides at least two personal benefits. First, you'll probably discover that the structures you become familiar with through using parliamentary procedure boost your confidence in general. Second, you're apt to find that you've laid the foundations for establishing yourself as a solid, reliable leader. Third, although you shouldn't be stricter or more formal than is good for your group, using parliamentary procedure regularly and as a matter of course, should contribute to the impression that you care about consistency, equity, and efficiency in your dealings with other people in general.

Background of *Robert's Rules*

Henry Martyn Robert was an engineer who rose to the rank of brigadier general in the U.S. Army and first put together his *Rules of Order* in 1876. His aim was to keep that publication to 50 pages, but its first edition contained 176 pages. The eleventh edition now runs nearly four times as long—more than 650 pages. This current edition, abbreviated as "RONR" (*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*), was formulated by a team of *parliamentarians* which includes Robert's grandson.

A shorter summary, also prepared in part by Henry Martyn Robert III, comprises the most important features of RONR. It includes the contention that "at least 80 percent of the content of RONR will be needed less than 20 percent of the time" in even the largest, most complicated groups (Robert, et al., 2011). Thus, a formal group which adopts RONR as its parliamentary authority may decide to use the summary volume to help it get through most common operational situations, since the summary's sections are all linked item-by-item to more detailed portions of RONR itself.

Ingredients of RONR

Robert's Rules offers guidance for all the essential processes a group is likely to conduct. It suggests that a group select a chairperson and a secretary, that it decide on what proportion of its membership constitutes a **quorum** so that it is able to conduct necessary business, and that it follow at least a "simplified standard order of business" which may be as straightforward as this:

1. *Reading and approval of minutes.* Deciding whether notes of the previous meeting, generally taken by the group's secretary, can be accepted as written or if they need to be modified.
2. *Reports.* Statements by officers and heads of committees, along with any recommendations associated with them. For instance, the finance committee of a student government association might propose that the association as a whole spend money from a particular budget to send a student representative to a professional conference or purchase new bookkeeping software for the association's treasurer.
3. *Unfinished business.* Some groups use the term "old business" in this part of their agendas and allow members to bring up any topics that have occupied the body's attention throughout its history, but RONR discourages this. Instead, it insists that "unfinished business" be restricted to items which were left incomplete at the conclusion of the previous meeting, or which were scheduled to be considered in the previous meeting but were postponed until the next one due to insufficient time (Robert et al., 2011).
4. *New business.* This part of a meeting revolves around motions introduced by members and considered by the group as a whole.

Agendas

Although a bare-bones standard order of business may satisfy the requirements of RONR, most groups decide to make use of an agenda such as the ones we've discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. Such agendas, if and when they are approved by groups at the outset of their meetings, may be individualized to name the persons who are to give reports and make recommendations. They may also include timelines that refer to specific topics, offer background information, and highlight when breaks will take place. RONR recognizes that every group has a personality of its own and should have the flexibility to express that personality through a well-crafted agenda tailored to meet its needs.

Making Decisions

Generally speaking, RONR specifies that decisions about proposals should be made as soon as possible after the proposals are made. For instance, if a recommendation is made during an officer's report, it should be handled at that time.

Nothing may be decided in RONR unless a **motion**—a formal proposal put forth orally by a participant in the meeting—has been made. The proper way to submit a motion is to say, "I move that…" (not "I make a motion that…"). Some groups may decide that any motion raised by a member will be deliberated, but RONR requires that nearly all motions receive a *second* before the chairperson can proceed with the next step. That step is for the chairperson to "*state the question*"—that is, announce to the group that a motion has been made and seconded and is open for debate. Details on exceptions to this process can be found in RONR itself, but the basic reason for requiring a second is to ensure that more than a single individual would like to consider a proposal.

Assuming that the person who submits a motion has done so according to the procedures of the group, the motion is considered to be *pending*, and its initial form it is referred to as the "*main motion*." The chairperson is responsible for soliciting and guiding debate about any motion.

In the course of debate, the main motion may be amended or withdrawn, in part according to *subsidiary motions* and in part according to the will of the person who originally proposed it. It's also possible for a group to refer a matter to a subgroup or postpone discussion of it to a set time.

Generally, members should be recognized by the chairperson in the order in which they make it clear that they wish to speak. RONR stipulates that a speaker has up to 10 minutes each time he or she speaks and that the speaker isn't permitted to "save" time or transfer it to another person. If a motion being considered in a large group is particularly controversial, the chairperson should make an effort to recognize proponents and opponents back and forth so as to ensure balance in the presentations.

When debate ceases on a motion, the chairperson should say "The question is on the adoption of the motion that…" and put the question to a vote of the membership. When the vote has been observed or tallied, the chairperson announces which side "has it"—that is, which side has won the vote. He or she then declares that the motion has been adopted or lost and indicates the effect of the vote, as necessary.

For instance, someone in a student committee might move that $2,000 be spent toward sending Jamie, its vice president, to a conference in New York City. After the motion has been seconded and debated, you as the chairperson might call for a vote and announce afterward, "The 'ayes' have it. The motion carries, and Jamie will receive $2,000 toward expenses for the trip to New York. Jamie, you'll need to talk to Cameron, our treasurer, to get a check cut for you in advance of your travel."

Being Civil

The point of following *Robert's Rules* is to preserve order, decorum, and civility so that a group can make wise decisions. RONR allows a group's chairperson to rule people's comments *out of order* if the comments are irrelevant (not "germane") or are considered to be personal attacks.

Robert's Rules even makes provisions for group members to avoid direct attack. It attempts to accomplish this by allowing members of a group to refer to each other in the third person—e.g., "the previous speaker" or "the treasurer"—rather than by using each other's names. Unfortunately, in long-established organizations such as the US Congress people sometimes get away with incivility even within such tight interpretations of the strictures of RONR. Consider the story, which may or may not be historically accurate, of two US Senators. Senator Smith had just spoken passionately in favour of earmarking funds to build a bridge across a certain river in his state. Senator Jones said, "That's ridiculous. We don't need a bridge there. I could pee halfway across that river!" Senator Smith retorted, "The previous speaker is out of order!" to which Senator Jones replied, "I suppose I am. Otherwise I could pee all the way across it."

More Details

How strictly a particular group adheres to the requirements of RONR will depend on the group's purposes, its level of formality, and sometimes even on the personalities of its members and leaders. One statewide college faculty organization in the Pacific Northwest prides itself on operating according to what it jocularly calls "Bobby's Rules of Order," although its bylaws stipulate that it is governed by RONR. The faculty organization has found for nearly 40 years that it can achieve its aims and maintain civility without observing many of the official trappings of RONR. Your group, on the other hand, may want and need the consistency and specificity of RONR to get its work done.

In any case, knowing the basic nature of *Robert's Rules* and how to get guidance on its finer points can be advantageous to anyone who wants to promote efficient operations and decision-making by a group.

> *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (RONR), a thorough and well-established system of parliamentary procedure, can be followed in greater or lesser detail as a group attempts to ensure civility, fairness, and efficiency in the conduct of its business.

12.4 Post Meeting Communication and Minutes

Bookends hold books up. Without them, the books tumble onto each other or off the shelf. The "bookends" of a meeting are as important as the meeting itself. Without them, nobody knows beforehand what's going to happen or remembers afterward what did.

We've discussed the first major bookend of a meeting, the agenda, now we will look at the bookend that follows a meeting: the minutes.

The Why and How of Minutes

Among the exasperating experiences in group meetings are moments when people say, "We talked about this before—at least twice. Why are we going over the same ground again?" There are also those times when we hear, "John, you were supposed to report on this. What's your report?" and John replies, "But I didn't know I was supposed to make a report."

The best way to prevent such deflating episodes is to follow up after each meeting with good records. Here are two ways to do this:

1. *Keep ironclad minutes.* One college in Washington State has used this template for many years to shape and retain minutes of its academic committee meetings:

Example Minutes Template

Date/time/location of meeting: ____

Purpose/goals of meeting: ____

Person presiding: ____

Officers in Attendance: ____

Other members in attendance: ____

Members absent: ____

Table 12.1 Agenda Template

Agenda Item	Discussion/Motions	Action Taken	Follow-Up
1. Minutes		Approved as printed.	
2. Agenda		Approved as disseminated 5/29/2013.	
3. Roof problem	John Smith reported that the ceiling in the staff washroom leaks. Motion by Mary Jones to have the ceiling repaired; motion passed.	Plant/Maintenance will be asked to patch the leak.	John Smith will contact Jane Doe, head of Plant/Maintenance, by 6/15 to schedule repair.

Time of adjournment: ____

Date/time/place of next meeting: ____

Notice that this style of minutes lacks extensive text and "he said/she said" descriptions.

Instead, it makes crystal clear who's responsible for what actions prior to the next meeting. Its contents are brief, easy to read, and very difficult to misinterpret (or evade). It promotes action and accountability.

2. *Distribute minutes promptly*. When and how you disseminate minutes shows whether and how much you care about what your group does. If your group has bylaws, it may be a good idea for them to include a time frame within which minutes of meetings need to be distributed (such as "within five days").

   Make sure your mailing list of people to receive minutes is up to date and accurate. This will ensure that no one misses the next meeting because he or she didn't see when and where it was scheduled to take place.

   Sloppy minutes degrade the value of the work and time people invest together. They can also weaken a group's morale. Professional minutes, on the other hand, may even make people who weren't at a meeting wish they had been – and can strengthen your group's pride and solidarity. Professional minutes can also protect your organization legally if something is to go awry.

What Else?

If you're the leader of the group, making sure that minutes are prepared and distributed well is only one step toward increasing the likelihood that your meetings will achieve their full potential of transmitting discussions into plans and plans into action. You should do three other things after a meeting.

First, you should contact group members who were identified in the minutes as being responsible for follow-up action.

See if they need information, resources, or other help to follow through on their assignments. If a committee or subcommittee was asked to take action on some point, get in touch with whoever heads it and offer to provide materials or other support that may be needed to accomplish its work.

Second, you should set a positive example. Take a few minutes to reflect on how effective you were in facilitating the last meeting and ask yourself what you might change at the next one. Be sure, too, to implement any decisions you were assigned in a timely fashion.

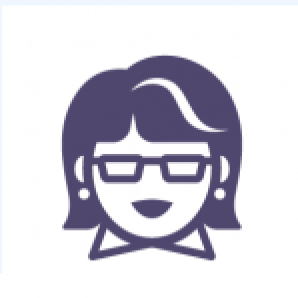
Third, you should make sure that the minutes of your group's meetings are stored in secure form, either physically or digitally or both, so that they are available to both you and other group members at any time. Your group's **institutional memory**, which is the foundation for future members to build upon, needs to be tended regularly and diligently. When in doubt, it's better to hold onto information and documentation related to your group. Discarding something because you think to yourself "nobody will forget this" may very well turn out to be a mistake.

Observing these suggestions may not make the experiences associated with following up on group meetings heavenly, but it might at least keep them from being too hellish.

> After a group meets, its leader should ensure that professional minutes are disseminated and that other members of the group follow through with their responsibilities.

12.5 Conclusion

Reflection Activity



Returning to Naiomi's story from the beginning of this chapter, what are some ways Naiomi can advocate to make the meetings more effective at her workplace? Is it possible to review the meetings scheduled and see if there are alternative ways to meet the goals of the group other than meeting? How can she make sure she organizes her time effectively in order to meet her deadlines and complete required tasks?

Exercises

1. Think of a problem at your college that you and some of your fellow students feel needs to be addressed. Imagine that you've been told you have two weeks to present a proposal to the president of the college for remedying the problem. Draft an agenda for as many meetings as you feel would be necessary to involve the proper people in confronting the problem. Describe how the meetings would take place, including what rules you would follow, who would be invited, and what specific items would be dealt with in what sequence.
2. What do you consider to be the pros and cons of limiting the number of people invited to a group meeting?
3. Reread the description of Bonnie's abilities in 12.2 and rank them in order of importance, then list which your feel are absolutely essential to successful leadership of meetings.
4. Which instances of "Perils of Poor Facilitation" from 12.2 have you experienced in group meetings? Describe two or three such instances. What action might the group leader have taken to prevent or resolve the episodes?
5. Some cultures value exact punctuality differently from others. If you were leading a series of meetings comprising members of several cultural groups, what steps, if any, would you take to accommodate or modify people's habits and expectations concerning the starting and ending times of the meetings?
6. Imagine that you're the new chairperson of a group which got seriously off track in the first of its meetings that you presided over. You tried gently redirecting people to discuss pertinent issues, but they

first ignored and then resisted your attempts. What steps might you take to address the situation?

Additional Resources

A look at companies that hold unique meetings: [We've Got to Start Meeting Like This]

Silberman, M. (1999). *101 ways to make your meetings active.* Jossey-Bass.
Provides fun activities and exercises to help prepare people to conduct meetings effectively.

Streibel, B.J. (2003). *The manager's guide to effective meetings.* McGraw-Hill.
Includes advice on conducting virtual meetings, as well as useful examples and checklists related to meeting management.

Bens, I. (2016). *Facilitation at a Glance.* Goal/QPC.
A wonderful pocket guide to facilitation, filled with tools and techniques useful to both novice and advanced facilitators. Great set of tools for problem solving.

Lind, L. and Kaner, S. (2014). *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making.* Jossey-Bass.
An excellent resource for ideas on facilitation, with a focus on decision-making tools and techniques. The book includes excellent illustrations, which can be reproduced to help explain facilitation concepts to others.

Other Meeting Design and Facilitation Resources

The International Association of Facilitators (IAF)

The IAF promotes, supports and advances the art and practice of professional facilitation through methods exchange, professional growth, practical research, collegial networking and support services.

Interaction Associates

Interaction Associates is the creator and distributor of the Mastering Meetings: Tools for Collaborative Action and Essential Facilitation classes which MIT is licensed to teach. The Tips and Techniques section at their Web site is particularly useful.

Glossary

Formative assessment – takes place during an activity and allows people to modify their behaviour in response to its results.

Institutional memory – the foundation for future members to build upon, a collection of information and documentation.

Motion – a formal proposal put forth orally by a participant in the meeting.

Summative assessment – implemented at the end of an activity.

Quorum – the minimum number of people needed to conduct the business of the group.

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12.6 Activity: Critique of Formal Campus or Community Gathering

Critique of Formal Campus or Community Gathering

STUDENT'S NAME: ____________________________________

Date: ____________________________________

I attended a meeting/event of this group: ____________________________________

on this date: ___________________________ at this location: ____________________________________

from ___________ a.m./p.m. to ___________ a.m./p.m.

The subject of the meeting/event was: ____________________________________

The purpose of the meeting/event was: ____________________________________

Name of the person leading the meeting/event: ____________________________________

The person's title within the group (e.g., president, chair, etc.): ____________________________________

At what time was the meeting/event scheduled to begin? ____________________________________

At what time did the meeting/event begin? ____________________________________

At what time was the meeting/event scheduled to end? ____________________________________

At what time did the meeting/event end? ____________________________________

Was an agenda used at the meeting/event? ______ YES ______ NO

[*If an agenda was used, please attach a copy to this form*]

How many people attended the meeting/event? ____________________________________

What main topic(s) was/were discussed at the meeting/event? ____________________________________

If the group made any decisions, please list them here:

1. ___________________________________
2. ___________________________________
3. ___________________________________

What method(s) did the group use to make its decision(s)?:

______ Voice vote ______ Written voting ______ Consensus ("We all agree that XYZ")

______ Other: ___________________________________

______ Unsure of method

What particularly effective words, actions, stories, examples, or arguments stick in your mind from the event/activity?

Please place an "X" on the following scales to show your evaluation of the meeting/event:

Boring |______|______|______|______|______| Fascinating

Chaotic |______|______|______|______|______|| Well-Organized

Unintelligible |______|______|______|______|______| Clear / Easy to Understand

Routine |______|______|______|______|______| Controversial

The event/activity could have been improved by…

This is what I learned from the meeting/event that will make me a better student, employee, or citizen:

Other comments about the meeting/event:

CHAPTER 13: INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Chapter Summary

13.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

- Explain the purpose of a job interview.
- Use the 'SAR' technique to answer behavioural interview questions.
- Prepare for an interview using practice interview questions.
- List ways to impress at an interview.
- Discuss ways to follow-up after an interview

Professional Perspective

Naiomi's company is expanding, and the workload is mounting. She is looking to hire a marketing consultant. Naiomi has not hired anyone before and is unfamiliar with what questions she can ask during the interview. Are some interview questions better than others? Are there some questions that cannot be asked?

13.1 Before the Interview: Preparation

What Is A Job Interview?

> A structured conversation or dialogue between two or potentially more individuals to assess a candidate's skills, qualifications, and fit for a company or organization's vacant position.

The interviewer(s) asks pre-determined questions and the interviewee provides succinct responses confidently illustrating their skills and qualifications in relation to the job posting.

Two- way conversation:

- Employer to provide exceptional candidate care creating a welcoming and relaxed environment.
- Candidate is put at ease to communicate openly with self-assurance and confidence.
- Flow of discussion = both parties to be well informed.

Preparation is Essential

- *Research the employer.* 'Google' the employer and prepare questions which demonstrate your interest and understanding of the business or organization. What is their Mission, Vision, and Values? Do they align with yours? Why do you want to work there?
- *Research the position.* Ask for a job description and become familiar with the qualifications and knowledge you will need to do the job.
- *Review your resume and list of skills* related to job and anticipate questions that might be asked.
- *Update your resume and reference* list and make copies to take to the interview.
- *Prepare and organize your portfolio* with information that is relevant to the job.
- *Plan your wardrobe.* Dress one to two levels above the job you are applying for.
- *Google map or GPS the location* to determine the best way to get to the interview.

13.2 Before the Interview: Potential Questions

Questions You May Be Asked – Prepare Your Responses

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you apply for this position?
- What have you learned from your previous jobs?
- Why are you interested in a career in this field?
- What can you offer our organization?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- What are your salary expectations?

13.3 Before the Interview: Behavioural Based Questions

Behavioural Based Interview Questions

Behavioural interview questions ask the candidates specific examples of past experiences.

Past performance → Predicts future performance

Use the '**SAR**' Technique to Answer Behavioural Interview Questions.

Situation	Detail the background. Provide a context. Where? When?
Action	Elaborate your specific action. What did you do? How? What tools did you use?
Result	Explain the result: accomplishment, recognition, savings, etc. Quantify things.

Commonly Asked Behavioural Based Interview Questions

Accountability Questions

Being honest, reliable and responsible for our decisions and actions

- Provide an example of a time when you had multiple conflicting priorities and demands in your role which were time. What did you do to accomplish the required tasks? Or Explain how you prioritize work when everything is a priority?
- Tell me about a time a when you faced a tough situation. How did you address and resolve it?
- Walk us through a time when you knew things were not going well with a particular project or process. What happened? What was the end result?

Respect / Conflict Resolution Questions

Being inclusive, understanding and considerate

- Describe a time when you had to resolve a difference of opinion/conflict with a co-worker or supervisor.
- Tell me about a time when you were working on a team project and one of the team members was not fulfilling their obligations or contributing equally? How did you manage the situation?

Team Work / Collaboration Questions

Working together to achieve positive results

- Provide an example of when you had to work with someone who was extremely difficult to get along with and as a result, made it challenging for you to complete your work. How did you handle the interaction with that person?
- Teamwork is essential in the smooth operation of the department. Describe your best example of contributing positively to the team to achieve a favourable outcome.
- Describe a time when you worked as part of a team.

Problem Solving Questions

Relate your ability to identify issues, obstacles and opportunities and develop and implement solutions

- Tell me about a time when you had to solve a challenging problem.
- Describe a time when you identified a potential problem and fixed it prior to it becoming urgent.

Customer / Client Service Questions

Align with values, providing service excellence

- Tell me about a time when you interacted with a difficult customer / client. What happened and how did you rectify the situation?
- Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond to support a customer's needs.
- Describe a time when a customer was pleased with your service.

Innovation / Process Improvement Questions

Create and adopt better more efficient processes

- Provide an example when you implemented an idea or process that had a positive impact on the work you do or the team that you work.
- Describe a process improvement which you have been involved in. What did you do to contribute to making it a success? What roadblocks did you encounter and how did you overcome them?

13.4 Before the Interview: Situational Based Questions

Situational Based Interview Questions

Situational interview questions are when you are asked to put yourself in a hypothetical situation and explain what action(s) you would take in that scenario.

- What would you do if you and your co-worker disagreed?
- You are working on many projects with tight deadlines, your manager approaches you and assigns you a new equally important project, how would you prioritize your work?
- You are overwhelmed in your role due to a heavy workload, what would you do?
- What would you do if you were asked to complete a task that you have never done before?
- You are asked to do something that is not part of your role. What would you do?
- You are working on a project which has a deadline fast approaching. You are waiting on important facts from a colleague who promised they would get it to you last week, this is impacting the submission. What would you do?

13.5 Before the Interview: Qualification Based Questions

Qualification Based Interview Questions

Interview questions targeted at your qualifications are a critical part of demonstrating that you not only possess the required education, training, and experience but also that you can apply them to the job making you the the ideal candidate and the best fit for the role. The greatest way to answer qualification-based interview questions is to prepare prior to the interview.

- Review the job posting in detail and document all the requirements.
- Describe your qualifications using concrete applicable examples.
- Focus on how your skills and abilities benefited or brought success to the company.

13.6 Before the Interview: Illegal Interview Questions

Interview Questions That Should Not Be Asked

Canadian Human Rights law prohibits interviewers from asking questions concerning:

- County/place of origin and citizenship status – *What country are you from?*
- Religion, faith, or creed
- Age – *How old are you?*
- Gender or sexual orientation
- Race or ethnicity
- Family structure, children, or marital status – *Are you married? Do you have children? Do you plan to have children in the future?*
- Mental or physical health and disability – *Do you have any physical impairment or disability?*
- Appearance, height, and weight
- Pardoned offences

Although the interviewer may be making casual conversation and the inquiry is innocent, the above listed questions are deemed discriminatory and are inappropriate in an interview.

Interview questions should solely be based on the candidate's skills and ability to perform the duties of the job and the bona fide occupational requirements deemed essential in performing those duties.

13.7 Before the Interview: Candidate Questions and Practice Resources

Suggested Candidate Questions

Questions You May Ask:

- Can you describe the company culture?
- Why is this position available?
- What are the two or three most important characteristics you are looking for in a candidate for this position?
- What future career opportunities exist within the company?
- What are the greatest challenges and opportunities facing the successful candidate in performing this job?
- What is your favourite part of working here?
- Who are the main people or teams that the successful candidate would collaborate with?
- How are work assignments handled? Will I work independently or as a member of a team?
- What might a typical day be like for a person in this position?
- How often are an employee's performance evaluated and what criteria are used? What are the next steps in the recruitment process?
- When will the hiring decision be made?

Practice Your Interview

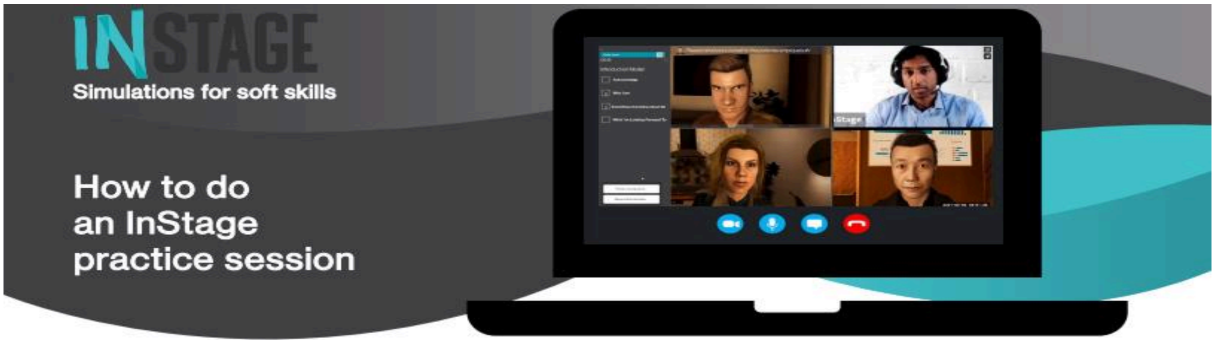
PRACTICE + PRACTICE + PRACTICE = SUCCESS

- Build confidence and reduce stress! Rehearsing for an interview allows you to respond to questions with ease and communicate effectively.
- Why not practice your answers to typical interview questions in video format? If you have access to a webcam you can practice your interview skills using Interview Stream.

- Start by watching the tutorial, select questions and conduct a video interview. See and hear what you look and sound like in an interview setting. You can even customize your own video.

InStage Resource

At Fanshawe we have a great resource and practice tool called INSTAGE Simulation for soft skills. Reach out to Career Services to learn more.



"[Before the Interview: Candidate Questions and Practice Resources]" from [Interview Toolkit] by Fanshawe College is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.]

13.8 At the Interview: First Impressions

Tips to Impress During the Interview

Make a good first impression:

- *Arrive 5 to 10 minutes early*. Do not be late and do not be too early either. Turn off your cellphone upon arrival.
- *Greet all parties* with respect and professionalism.
- *Present yourself positively*. Make eye contact, offer a firm handshake, fist pump, positive nod, smile, and be aware of your body language.
- *Listen and think carefully* before you answer. Repeat the question aloud to make sure you are clear on the question. Try to relax.
- *Pause and reflect* on the question. It is ok to carefully consider your answer before responding.
- *Ask relevant questions* and inquire about the next steps / follow up.
- *Close by restating your strengths and interest* in the position and why you are the best suited candidate for the role.

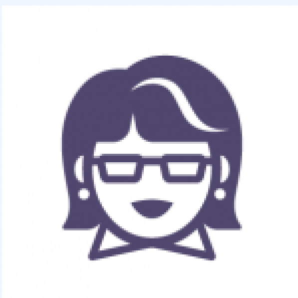
13.9 After the Interview: Following Up

Tips to Follow Post Interview

- *Send a follow up* 'Thank You' letter by email to the interviewer(s) immediately upon your return home. Include a brief paragraph reiterating your interest in the position and company and how you qualify for the role.
- *Reflect on the interview.* Document the questions and your responses. Were there questions you struggled with? How could you have been better prepared?
- *Review your performance.* What would you do the next time to improve your success?
- *Request feedback.* If you are not successful ask for feedback from the interviewer.
- *Treat every interview as an opportunity* to improve your skills. Focus on the positives, what you learned and what you can do better next time.

13.10 Conclusion

Reflection Activity



Returning to Naiomi's story from the beginning of this chapter, as a person in a hiring position, what are some of the things she should consider when interviewing potential candidates? What are some of the common questions asked during an interview? What are some of the things that Naiomi should look for when meeting with the candidate? What types of questions should she avoid asking?

Quick Quiz

After reading through our Interview Toolkit, complete the following review to test your knowledge recall. Select the most appropriate answers for each set of questions.

Be sure to pay attention to the feedback given when you select the correct answer to each question.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=410#h5p-56

CHAPTER 14: DIGITAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Chapter Preview

14.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

- Trace the evolution of online and digital media.
- Discuss how digital and online media are more personal and social than traditional media.
- Identify social media engagement behaviour types.
- Explore ways to use digital communication as a business professional.

Professional Perspective

Dhavit has been asked by his boss to prepare a report about ways to use online and digital media communication tools, and what digital strategies the institution might use to promote job opportunities. He has not used social media for personal use, and is uncertain about business contexts and website design. As you read this chapter, consider the ways that Dhavit might learn more about social media in professional communication contexts, and how he might use what he learns to extend the reach of his department when hiring for higher education.

In the last 20 years, online and digital media has grown in leaps and bounds to become a fixture in the daily life of most people in Canada. Prior to the turn of the century, traditional media, which consisted of mainly print, radio, and television/movies, was limited to a few places and had a somewhat limited presence in lives and societies. For example, in the 20^{th} century, radio and television grew to become features in the home. Movies were primarily enjoyed in theaters until VCRs and DVD players brought them into homes. The closest thing to a portable mass medium in the 20^{th} century was reading a book or newspaper on a commute to and from work.

Digital media in the 21^{st} century are more personal and more social than traditional media. A small device that fits in your pocket has the ability to connect you with the world, from anywhere and at any time. It has changed the way you communicate, and in particular the way you approach communication in business. In this chapter, you will learn more about the evolution of digital media, consider how people engage with digital media, and how you can begin to use digital media as a business professional.

To open this chapter, watch the following 16 minute video from Helen Morris-Brown on *The Psychology of Communicating Effectively in a Digital World.*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=285#oembed-1

Video: The psychology of communicating effectively in a digital world by Helen Morris-Brown [16:03]
Transcript available

14.1 Digital and Social Media

Digital media, as described in this chapter, couldn't exist without the move from analog to digital technology, as all the types of new media you will learn about are digitally based (Siapera, 2012). **Digital media** are composed of and/or are designed to read numerical codes (hence the root word 'digit'). The most commonly used system of numbers is binary code, which converts information into a series of 0s and 1s. This shared code system means that any machine that can decode (read) binary code can make sense of, store, and replay the information.

Analog media are created by encoding information onto a physical object that must then be paired with another device capable of reading that specific code. In terms of physicality, analog media are a combination of mechanical and physical parts, while digital media can be completely electronic and have no physicality. To make recordings using traditional media technology, grooves were carved into vinyl to make records or changes were made in the electromagnetic signature of ribbon or tape to make cassette tapes. Each of these physical objects must be paired with a specific device, such as a record player or a cassette deck, to be able to decode and listen to the music.

Digital media changed how most people collect and listen to music. Now music files are stored electronically and can be played on many different platforms, including tablets, computers, and smartphones. Many people who came of age in the digital revolution were so used to having digital music that the notion of a physical music collection was completely foreign to them…that is until vinyl started making a reappearance. What was old has become "new" again, as a whole new generation discovers that actually holding a record (or cassette), and listening to their favourite music laid down on vinyl, offers an experience that further appeals to their senses.

"VCR Detail" *by* Petr Kratochvil, CC0

Analog media like videocassette recorders (VCRs) are only compatible with specific media objects that have been physically encoded with information.

In news coverage and academic scholarship, you will see several different terms used when discussing digital media. Other terms used include new media, online media, social media, and personal media. In this chapter these items will be combined and referred to as **digital media**.

Digital media and technology are now changing faster than ever before. In short, what is new today may not be considered new in a week. Despite the rapid changes in technology, the multiplatform compatibility of much of digital media paradoxically allows for some stability.

Key to digital media is the notion of **technological convergence**. The ongoing digitalization of traditional media allows them to circulate freely and be read/accessed/played by many digital media platforms without the need for conversion (Siapera, 2012). This multi-platform compatibility is relatively new. In the past, each type of media had a corresponding platform. For example, you couldn't play records in an eight-track cassette tape player or a VHS tape in a DVD player. In the past, the human eye was the encoding and decoding device needed to engage with analog forms of print media. In the present you can read this textbook in print, on a computer, or on an e-reader, tablet, smartphone, or other handheld device; you can also listen to an audio book or have a device read an e-book to you. Another characteristic of new media is the blurring of lines between producers and consumers, as individual users now have a more personal relationship with their media.

Social Media

Media and mass media have long been discussed as a unifying force. The shared experiences of the first person walking on the moon in 1969, or following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, were facilitated through media. Digital media, in particular, is characterized by its connectivity. In the past, a large audience was connected to the same radio or television broadcast, newspaper story, book, or movie via a one-way communication channel sent from one place to many. Today, digital media connects mass media outlets to people and allows people to connect back to them via the internet. Technology has allowed for mediated social interaction since the days of the telegraph, but these connections were not at the mass level they are today. Personalities such as Drake and Justin Bieber, and organizations like the Toronto Blue Jays or the CBC, can reach millions of people with just one tweet. Social media doesn't just allow for connection; it allows us more control over the quality and degree of connection that we maintain with others (Siapera, 2012).

Read the following web article on Social Media Use in Canada

The most influential part of the new web is **social networking sites (SNSs)**, which allow users to build a public or semipublic profile, create a network of connections to other people, and view other people's profiles and networks of connections (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Although SNSs have existed for over a decade, earlier iterations such as Friendster and MySpace have given way to the giant that is Facebook. Facebook, as of April 2018, has more than 2.96 billion users worldwide (Statista, 2018). More specific SNSs, like LinkedIn, focus on professional networking. The ability to self-publish information, likes/dislikes, status updates, profiles, and links allows people to craft their own life narrative and share it with other people. Likewise, users can follow the narratives of others in their network as they are constructed. The degree to which we engage with others' narratives varies based on the closeness of the relationship and situational factors, but SNSs are used to sustain strong, moderate, and weak ties with others (Richardson & Hessey, 2009).

Social media enable interactivity between individuals that share a social network and also allow people to broadcast or 'narrowcast' their activities and interests.

You might conceptualize social media in another way—through the idea of collaboration and sharing rather than just through interpersonal connection and interaction. The growth of open source publishing and Creative Commons licensing also presents a challenge to traditional media outlets and corporations and copyrights. Open source publishing first appeared most notably with software programs. The idea was that the users could improve on openly available computer programs and codes and then the new versions, sometimes called derivatives, would be made available again to the community. **Crowdsourcing** refers more to the idea stage of development where people from various perspectives and positions offer proposals or information to solve a problem or create something new (Brabham, 2008). This type of open access and free collaboration helps encourage participation and improve creativity through the synergy created by bringing together different perspectives and has been referred to as the biggest shift in innovation since the Industrial Revolution (Kaufman, 2008).

Watch the following 1 minute video: *Stone Age to Modern Age – Evolution Of Communication*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=289#oembed-1

Video: Stone Age to Modern Age – Evolution Of Communication by LTE [6:44] Trascript available

14.2 Online Engagement

The key differentiating factor between traditional and digital media is the ability to interact, or engage with the communicator, and others in a community. Think back to the basic process of communication: the messenger (encoder) sends a message through a medium, which is received and decoded by an audience. In traditional media, the process was primarily one-way. In digital media, users have the ability to interact and respond to the message — in other words, they can 'engage' with the message and messenger.

But why are people drawn to digital communication? For the answers to this question, you might consider Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which provides you with an understanding of the motivation that might be behind online engagement. Although engaging online doesn't really satisfy physiological needs (although it can impact our sleep!), it certainly speaks to the other categories in the hierarchy as see in Figure 14.1 below:

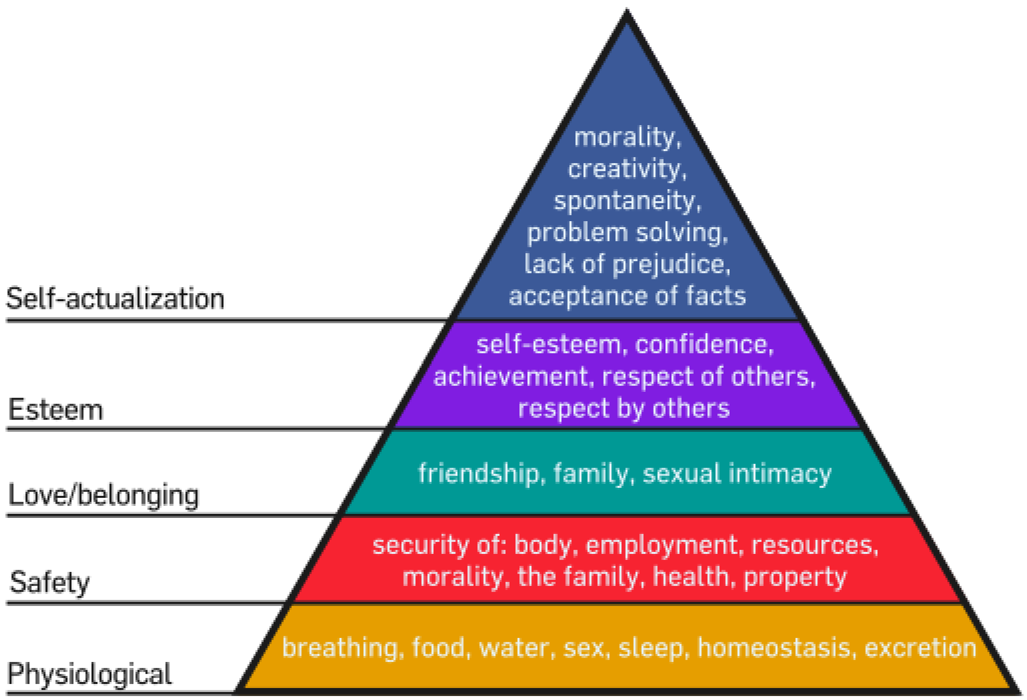


Figure 14.1. "[Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs]" by [Factoryjoe], [CC BY-SA 4.0]

Examples from social and digital media paradigms:

- *Safety needs*: Online sites are key to finding employment and one of the first places we turn for information on health issues, health products and health practitioners is the internet – whether for ourselves, our families, or our pets. How to protect your child or pet from coyotes coming into your yard? Google will likely provide the answer. As we meet some of our safety needs online however, we may open ourselves up to safety risks such as hacking, identity theft, phishing schemes, and cyber bullying.
- *Love and belongingness needs*: engaging online can provide a tremendous feeling of being accepted. Online communities grow friendships, intimacy and a feeling of affiliation.
- *Esteem needs*: Engagement from friends, colleagues and even strangers can feed the desire to improve one's

reputation or gain respect.

- *Self-actualization needs*: Digital media is full of examples of people who are working to realize their personal potential, “to become everything one is capable of becoming” (Maslow, p. 64).

Read the following web article that provides a deeper exploration of social media and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs: The Hierarchy of Needs for an Engaged Social Media Audience.

14.3 Your Digital Footprint

It used to be that applying for a job was fairly simple: send in a résumé, write a cover letter, and call a few references to make sure they will say positive things. However, there is a new step that is now a common part of this application process—sprucing up your virtual self, or your '**digital footprint**'.

The ubiquity of digital media allows anyone to easily start developing an online persona from as early as birth. Although this footprint may not accurately reflect the individual, it may be one of the first things a stranger sees. Those online photos may not look bad to friends and family, but your online digital footprint may be a hiring manager's first impression of you as a prospective employee. Someone in charge of hiring could search the internet for information on you even before calling references.

First impressions are an important thing to keep in mind when making an online persona professionally acceptable. Your presence online can be the equivalent of your first words to a brand-new acquaintance.

While it's possible to deactivate your social media accounts, once something is online, it's impossible to delete it completely. Photos, videos, and posts will likely outlive you. As a business professional, you'll need to begin to carefully curate what you post online, and what has already been posted.

This doesn't mean you should delete everything: in fact, employers and clients want to see that you have interests and connections outside of work. However, be aware that their first impression of you may be digital – you'll want to put your best 'foot' forward!

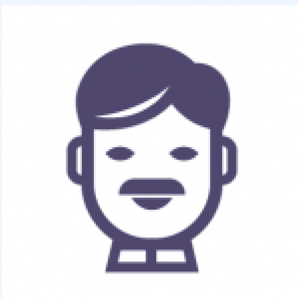
5 Ways to Improve your Digital Footprint

1. *Google yourself.* This is the best way to see what a potential employer or contact will see first, if they decide to do a search on you.
2. *Edit your own posts, including photos, video and multimedia.* Content that involves drugs, alcohol, illegal activities, strong political views, or any other controversial activity should be removed.
3. *Ask friends and family who have posted controversial content to take it down.*
4. *Set up professional accounts on one or more platforms, such as LinkedIn.* This will increase the chances of employers/clients seeing your professional side first, and is an inexpensive way to build your professional network.
5. *Keep it positive with future posts and contributions.* That will greatly reduce the chances that you will post something that could get you into trouble down the road.

Read the full article at the following link: How To Develop A Digital Presence For Professional Success

14.4 Conclusion

Reflection Activity



Returning to Dhavit's situation:

- What tools or ideas could Dhavit suggest to his boss to help promote job opportunities at his organization?
- What factors should Dhavit consider when designing his message to build engagement?
- What kind of approaches should Dhavit steer clear of?
- What might Dhavit do with his own digital footprint, as an established (but not very digital) business professional?

Quick Quiz

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=297#h5p-52

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=297#h5p-53

Additional Resources

Social Media Etiquette Rules for Business

The State of Digital Literacy in Canada. (2017). The Brookfield Institute Report.

Glossary

Analog media – created by encoding information onto a physical object that must then be paired with another device capable of reading that specific code.

Co-creation – this is the highest level on the matrix, in which users are earning, sharing, advocating, socializing and co-developing.

Co-Destruction – users will create new negative content with the aim of diminishing the reputation, trust or value of a person/brand/platform.

Consumption – this is a passive form on engagement, where users are reading and watching, primarily using social media as a source of information.

Crowdsourcing – refers to the idea stage of development where people from various perspectives and positions offer proposals or information to solve a problem or create something new.

Detachment – detached users have actively disengaged with a social media platform, person or brand. They will "unlike" or adjust settings so they do not see information or content.

Digital media – composed of and/or are designed to read numerical codes (hence the root word digit).

Digital footprint – how you are represented on the internet. May include images and a variety of social media networks if you participate in them.

Dormancy – these users may have previously been engaged online, but may occasionally be described as 'lurkers'. They make no contributions nor do they engage online.

Negative contribution – users will make negative active comments to try and influence others to change their feelings or opinions about a brand, subject, person or platform.

Positive contribution – users are engaging with content and others, but not necessarily adding content.

Social media – enables interactivity between individuals that share a social network and also allows people to broadcast or 'narrowcast' their activities and interests.

Social networking sites (SNSs) – allow users to build a public or semipublic profile, create a network of connections to other people, and view other people's profiles and networks of connections.

Technological convergence – the digitalization of traditional media that allows them to circulate freely and be read/accessed/played by many digital media platforms without the need for conversion.

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CHAPTER 15: FEEDBACK

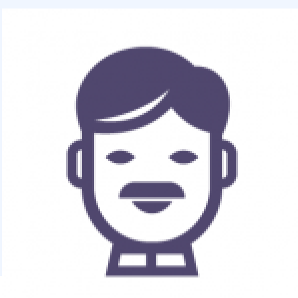
Chapter Summary

15.0 Introduction

Learning Objectives

- Explain why effective feedback is important.
- Outline how to give useful, skilful feedback that supports and encourages your colleagues.
- Discuss how to accept and implement feedback to advance yourself and your career.

Professional Perspective



Dhavit's colleague, Samantha, has been asked to present a workshop on benefits to a group of new employees at the university. Dhavit is a mid-career Canadian human resources specialist and has been doing these presentations for years. Samantha is a recent graduate and new to her role, so she has asked Dhavit to watch her practice and provide feedback. How should Dhavit go about providing effective feedback to Samantha?

He has a right to criticize, who has a heart to help. – Abraham Lincoln

Speaking is silver, listening is gold. – Turkish proverb

Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfills the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things. – Winston Churchill

This section looks at the final step in the communication process — **feedback** — a receiver's response to a source. Feedback can come in many forms. It contributes to the transactional relationship in communication, and serves as part of the cycling and recycling of information, content, negotiations, and meaning between the source and receiver.

The feedback loop is your connection to your audience. You may be sharing information with a relatively small group of friends and family, or presenting to a large audience of strangers. Either way, how and what you share is part of the communication process and makes an impact. Feedback is always present, even if we fail to capture or attend to the information as it is displayed. Because feedback is so valuable it's important to welcome it and use strategies to overcome any interfering factors that may reduce our ability to receive it.

15.1 Giving & Receiving Feedback

Why is Effective Feedback Important?

Effective feedback helps us improve and grow. Good feedback describes areas for improvement and offers ways to improve. Being able to give clear, useful feedback is an employability skill. Colleagues and bosses will appreciate your kind, helpful approach to improving teams and processes.

Effective feedback often tells us things we don't know about ourselves. Sometimes it's physical – like speaking too fast. Or it could be a mistake in our work that we're not aware of. Effective feedback helps us see our Blind Spots. When we see them we can start to improve.

Johari Window

The Johari Window explains self-awareness as a quadrant:

1. *Open*: What we know about ourselves, and is also known by others
2. *Blindspot*: What we don't know about ourselves, but is known by others
3. *Hidden*: What we know about ourselves, but is not known by others.
4. *Unknown*: What we don't know about ourselves, and is not known by others (Luft & Ingham, 1961).

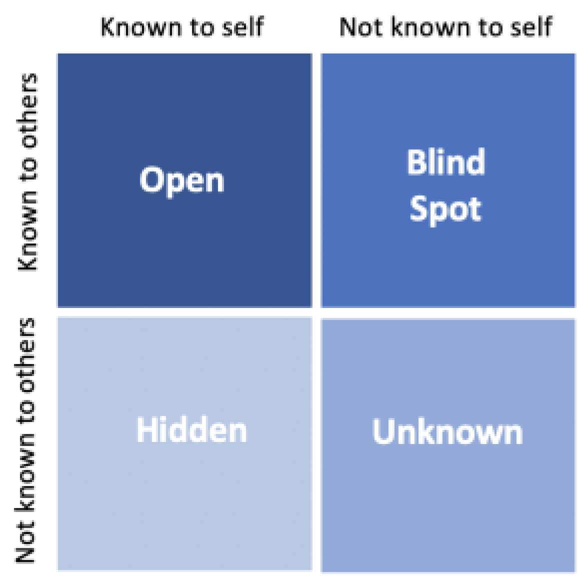


Figure 15.1. The Johari Window

How to Give Feedback

Make sure anything you say is effective. Effective feedback has 7 qualities:

1. *Timely*: Give feedback as soon as possible after the occurrence
2. *Kind*: Help the recipient grow and build skills; don't embarrass or shame them
3. *Positive*: Tell the recipient what *to* do, not what *not* to do
4. *Honest*: Always tell the truth (kindly!), even when a lie would feel more comfortable
5. *Useful*: Make suggestions that are practical and actionable
6. *Brief*: Focus on only 1 improvement – the most important one. (More may confuse the recipient)
7. *Specific*: Be precise and give examples

Figure 15.2. The 7 Qualities of Effective Feedback

The Easy 3-Step Method

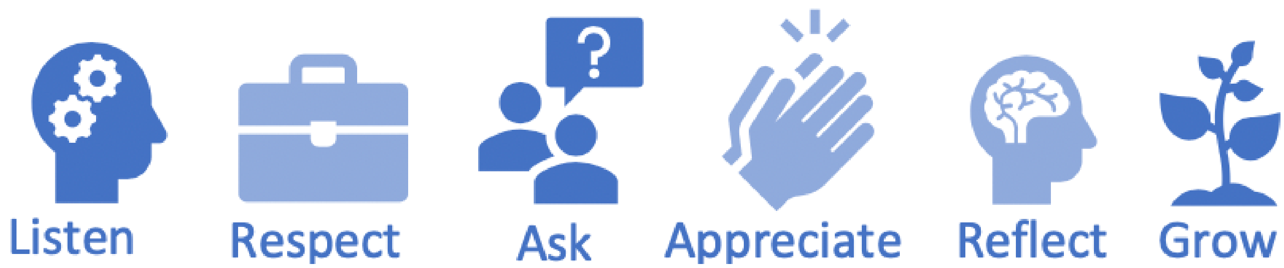
There are many ways to give feedback. This simple 3-step method is easy to remember and use.

1. *Keep*: Start by describing the best part: What's good; what (specifically) did the person do well – what should they keep doing?
2. *Improve*: Describe the most important improvement, and why it's important. Focus on 'next time' or 'in future.' For example, *Next time, try to let us know before the deadline. That way we can help you before it's a problem.* Or *Next time, try to speak louder, so everyone can hear your great ideas.*
3. *Ask*: the recipient if they have questions, if what you said makes sense.

How to Receive Feedback

We often feel uncomfortable and/or embarrassed when receiving feedback. Most of us have a really mean inner critic who scolds us for not being perfect. This makes it hard to listen and learn.

When someone offers feedback, try to silence your inner critic so that you can benefit from the ideas and support. These strategies will help:



Listen actively

- Make eye contact with the person giving you feedback
- Take notes – you'll forget what they said
- Summarize what they said

Be respectful & professional

- Avoid arguing, defending or explaining; try to drop your defences
- Watch your tone, words and body language
- Look for what's true and what's useful

Ask questions to clarify doubts and get precise details and examples

For example:

- *Can you say more about...?*
- *Can you explain that further, please?*
- *What advice can you give me?*
- *How can I build that skill?*
- *Where could I learn more about...?*
- *What do you recommend?*

Appreciate the feedback

- See the speaker's good intentions
- Thank the speaker and show appreciation for their time and energy
- Look for what's useful in the feedback and how it can help you

Reflect & grow

- Reflect on the feedback and decide your next steps:
  - What did you learn?
  - How will you use the feedback to improve your skills?
  - What will you do next time?

15.2 Giving Feedback to Others

From the perspective of a speaker, the audience members are vital in helping him or her to understand how they are doing both during and after the presentation. Knowing what it feels like to be presenting in front of a group is often motivation enough for many people to give **non-verbal, verbal, and/or written feedback**.

[Photo](#) *by* [*TEDxCapeTown*](#), [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

Non-Verbal Feedback

Boothman (2008) recommends listening with your whole body, not just your ears. Consider how confident you would feel speaking to a room full of people with their eyes closed, arms and legs crossed, and bodies bent in slouches. These listeners are presenting non-verbal cues communicating that they are uninterested and unimpressed. Meanwhile, listeners who are sitting up straight and facing you with an intent look are more likely to offer reassurance that they are engaged and your message is understood.

Eye contact is another non-verbal cue to the speaker that you are paying attention. You don't want to use an unblinking stare that will make the speaker uncomfortable, however, attentive eye contact can indicate you are listening and help you stay focused. There are some cultures where maintaining eye contact would cause additional discomfort, so keep that in mind. Also, you may be someone who listens better with eyes closed to visualize what is being said. This can be difficult for a speaker to recognize, so if this is you, consider incorporating one of the following non-verbals while you listen with eyes closed.

Nodding your head affirmatively, making backchannel responses such as "Yes," "Umhum," or "OK" can help the speaker gauge your interest. Even the speed of your head nod can signal your level of patience or understanding (Pease & Pease, 2006). Leaning in as a listener is far more encouraging than slumping in your seat. Miller (1994) suggests the "listener's lean" demonstrates substantial interest and "physically endorses" our message. That said, sending too many non-verbal responses to the speaker can be an issue…after all, a conference room full of people shifting in their seats and nodding their heads may translate as a restless audience that the speaker needs to recapture.

Verbal Feedback

While speakers sometimes want all questions held until the end of a presentation, asking questions when the opportunity presents itself can help you as a listener. For one, you have to listen in order to be able to ask a question. Your goal should be to ask open-ended questions ("What do you think about….?" rather than "We should do …, right?"). You can use questions to confirm your understanding of the speaker's message. If you're not entirely sure of a significant point, you might ask a clarifying question. These are questions such as "What did you mean?" "Can you be more specific?" or "What is a concrete example of your point?" These can help your comprehension while also offering the speaker feedback. When asking questions, approach the speaker in a positive, non-threatening way. A good listener doesn't seek to put the speaker on the defensive. You want to demonstrate your objectivity and willingness to listen to the speaker's response.

Finally, paraphrasing what has been said in your interactions with the speaker can be another useful tool for a good listener. Imagine the difference if, before you respond to an upset colleague, you take a moment to say, "I understand you are disappointed we didn't consult you before moving forward with the product release…" before you say, "we didn't have time to get everyone's input." Reflecting back the speaker's point of view before responding allows the speaker to know you were listening, and helps foster trust that everyone's voice is being heard.

> *The key to effective feedback lies in our intention, not our method. Your intentions must be about helping others, not just yourself. – Unknown*

Written Feedback

The ability to give effective feedback benefits oneself and others. Whether in professional or personal contexts, positive verbal and nonverbal feedback can boost others' confidence; negative feedback, when delivered constructively, can provide important perception checking and lead to improvements. Of course, negative feedback that is *not* delivered competently, can lead to communication difficulties that can affect a person's self-esteem and self-efficacy.

It is likely that you will be asked at some point to give written feedback to another person in a personal, academic, professional, or civic context. As schools, companies, and organizations have moved toward more team-based environments over the past twenty years, peer evaluations are now commonly used to help assess performance. Since it's important to know how to give competent and relevant feedback, and since the feedback can be useful for the self-improvement of the receiver, many students are asked to complete peer evaluations for classmates after they deliver a speech or work on a project together. The key to good written feedback is to offer constructive criticism, which consists of comments that are specific and descriptive enough for the receiver to apply them for the purpose of self-improvement. The following are guidelines for giving written feedback.

When giving written feedback to others

1. *Be specific and descriptive.* There is often a lack of specific comments when it comes to feedback on speech delivery. Students write things like "Eye contact" on a peer comment sheet, but neither the student nor the teacher knows what that means. While a comment like "Good eye contact" or "Not enough eye contact" is more specific, it's not descriptive enough to make it really useful. What would be best is "Good consistent eye contact with the audience during your introduction. Eye contact with the audience diminished when you seemed less confident in what you were presenting in the last 3 slides of your PowerPoint."
2. *Be positive.* If you are delivering your feedback in writing, pretend that you are speaking directly to the person and write it the same way. Comments like "Stop fidgeting" or "Get more sources" wouldn't likely come out during verbal feedback, because we know they sound too harsh. The same tone, however, can be communicated through written feedback. Instead, make comments that are framed in such a way as to avoid defensiveness or hurt

feelings.

3. *Be constructive.* Although we want to be positive in our feedback, comments like "Good job" aren't constructive, because a communicator can't actually take that comment and do something with it. A comment like "You were able to explain our company's new marketing strategy in a way that even I, as an engineer, could make sense of. The part about our new crisis communication plan wasn't as clear. Perhaps you could break it down the same way you did the marketing strategy to make it clearer for people like me who are outside the public relations department." This statement is positively framed, specific, and constructive because the speaker can continue to build on the positively reviewed skill by applying it to another part of the speech that was identified as a place for improvement.
4. *Be realistic.* Comments like "Don't be nervous" aren't constructive or realistic. Instead, you could say, "I know the first speech is tough, but remember that we're all in the same situation and we're all here to learn. I tried the breathing exercises discussed in the book and they helped calm my nerves. Maybe they'll work for you, too?" Comments like "Your accent made it difficult for me to understand you," may be true, but may also signal a need for more listening effort since we all technically have accents–changing them, if possible at all, would take considerable time and effort.
5. *Be relevant.* Feedback should be relevant to the assignment, task, and/or context. Feedback such as "Rad nail polish" and "Great smile," although nice compliments, are not relevant in formal feedback unless you're a fashion consultant or a dentist.

15.3 Receiving Feedback

"*Feedback*" *by* *geralt*, *Pixabay License*

Being open to receiving feedback is the only way to have a better picture of your performance as a presenter or speaker. Combining self-analysis with the feedback of your audience or peers is your opportunity to better understand your strengths as a presenter and what resonated well with your audience.

It may be a bit more uncomfortable to look at things that did not go well or receive feedback that's judgmental, biased, or otherwise laden with emotion. In the second chapter of this book, you learned about self-awareness. When receiving and making sense of feedback, it is very important to be self-aware and honest with yourself. This honesty will help you distinguish between an environmental situation, a situation that lies with the audience member, or a situation with the presenter.

> *We all need people who will give us feedback. That's how we improve. – Bill Gates*

The Art of Receiving Feedback

Most people are not born with a love of receiving feedback, however, we can *learn* to love receiving feedback. Receiving feedback is a wonderful way to truly learn about yourself and grow into the person you want to be.

> Joe Hrisch helps us all see The Joy of Getting Feedback in his Ted Talk below.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=2077#oembed-1

Video: The Joy of Getting Feedback by TEDx Talks [8:38] Transcript available

Some guidelines for learning to love receiving feedback.

- *Be Open and Accept Someone Else's Perspective*: In order for someone's feedback to help you grow and develop personally and professionally, you must be open to hearing and accepting what they have to say.
- *Embrace the Discomfort*: Receiving feedback can be uncomfortable, accepting that, and embracing it allows you to get the most of out of the feedback someone gives you.
- *Ask for More Information, Examples, and Clarifying Questions*: Don't hesitate to dig into the feedback. Ask questions to make sure that you understand the feedback, that you get really clear about how you can improve, and seek out examples of where you do great and where you have room for improvement.
- *Remember – Feedback Doesn't Mean You Suck*: Everyone has something to improve upon. Having someone in your life willing to give you feedback and help you grow is a privilege. Embrace the feedback, don't take it personally or to heart as a reflection that you are terrible at your job or a terrible person. Feedback is simply an opportunity to grow and improve who you are.

Fore more on receiving feedback read the article 10 Tips on Receiving Critical Feedback.

Giving formal feedback to yourself

Don't forget, you can also give yourself feedback. Self-evaluation can be difficult, because people may think their performance was effective and therefore doesn't need critique, or they may become their own worst critic, which can negatively affect self-efficacy. The key to effective self-evaluation is to identify strengths and weaknesses, to evaluate yourself within the context of the task, and to set concrete goals for future performance. What follows are guidelines relevant for students' self-evaluation of their speeches.

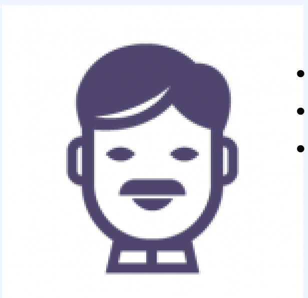
- *Identify strengths and weaknesses.* We have a tendency to be our own worst critics, so steer away from nit-picking or over focusing on one aspect of your performance that really annoys or stands out to you. It is likely that the focus of your criticism wasn't nearly as noticeable to others, or even noticed at all. For example, a student wrote a self-critique of which about 90 percent focused on how his face looked red. Although that was really salient for him when he watched his video, it wasn't a big deal for the audience members.
- *Evaluate yourself within a context.* If you are asked to speak about your personal life in a creative way, don't spend the majority of your self-evaluation critiquing your use of gestures. People have a tendency to overanalyze certain

aspects of their performance, which usually only accounts for a portion of their overall effectiveness or productiveness, and underanalyze other elements that have significant importance.

- *Set goals for next time.* Goal setting is important because most of us need a concrete benchmark against which to evaluate our progress. Once goals are achieved, they can be "checked off" and added to our ongoing skill set, which can enhance confidence and lead to the achievement of more advanced goals.
- *Revisit goals and assess progress at regular intervals.* We will not always achieve the goals we set so it is important to revisit the goals periodically to assess our progress. If you did not meet a goal, figure out why, and create an action plan to try again. If you did achieve a goal, try to build on that confidence to meet future goals.

15.4 Conclusion

Reflection Activity



Returning to Dhavit, who is preparing to give feedback to Samantha:

- What are some ways he can provide feedback?
- Which method is preferred? What are some things he should
- consider while giving the feedback to ensure Samantha is successful in presenting?

Quick Quiz

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/talkingbusiness/?p=1690#h5p-57

Exercises

1. Review a TedTalk or similar presentation. Focus on strengths and weaknesses from your perception, and provide feedback to the speaker as if they were a colleague. Post your feedback and compare with classmates.
2. Find a presentation online with comments posted below the video. Choose one example of feedback from the comments and share it with your classmates. Note any trends or themes that present themselves as you explore the comments. Does the "audience" provide appropriate feedback?
3. Why is good feedback important at school and in the workplace?
4. What seven qualities make feedback useful and effective?
5. What's an easy three-step method for giving feedback?
6. What five things can you do to accept and learn from feedback?

Glossary

Feedback – a receiver's response to a source. Feedback can be non-verbal, verbal or written.

Johari Window – a framework that can be used to better understand ourselves and others through recognition of unconscious bias and our willingness to receive feedback.

Non-verbal feedback – non-verbal clues about how the audience is feeling including body language and eye contact.

Verbal feedback – asking questions or paraphrasing the speaker's message.

Written feedback – feedback or evaluations which are written down.

Additional Resources

Visit this About.com page for an informative article for managers on how to deliver feedback to subordinates. How to Provide Feedback That Helps Employees Improve

Read more about how to accept and benefit from feedback in this e-zine article. Workplace Communication – Accepting Feedback

ChangingMinds.org discusses Rogers's five feedback types with examples. Rogers' Five Feedback Types

Chapter References

Boothman, N. (2008). *How to make people like you in 90 seconds or less.* Workman Publishing.

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Ancillary Resources

Instructor Slide Decks

Click on any chapter link below to download the respective slide deck.

- Talking Business – Chapter 1 – Communication Principles [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 2 – Perception [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 3 – Intercultural and International Communication [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 4 – Language [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 5 – Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethics [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 6 – Listening, Responding and Interpersonal Relationship Skills [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 7 – Teamwork, Leadership & Conflict Resolution [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 8 – Creating & Organizing Presentations [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 9 – Delivering Presentations [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 10 – Informative Presentations [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 11 – Persuasive Presentations [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 12 – Meetings and Agendas [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 13 – Interviewing Skills [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 14 – Digital Media and Communications [OER]
- Talking Business – Chapter 15 – Feedback [OER]

Version History

This page provides a record of changes made to the open textbook since its initial publication. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.1. If the change involves substantial updates, the version number increases to the next full number.

Version	Date	Change	Affected Web Rage
1.0	June 1, 2023	Publication	N/A