# 1 Establishing a Framework for Business Communication

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## LEARNING Objectives

1. Define communication and describe the value of communication in business.
2. Explain the communication process model and the ultimate objective of the communication process.
3. Discuss how information flows in an organization.
4. Explain how legal and ethical constraints, diversity challenges, changing technology, and team environment act as contextual forces that influence the process of business communication.

## Key Concepts

Understanding what communication is and how it occurs is central to successful transactions in the workplace. Business communication does not take place in a vacuum but is impacted by various external forces, including legal and ethical constraints, diversity challenges, team environment, and changing technology.

## Key terms

| Term | Page | Term | Page |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chronemics | 14 | Internal messages | 8 |
| Diversity skills | 13 | Kinesics | 14 |
| Downward communication | 6 | Organizational communication | 4 |
| Ethics | 10 | Proxemics | 14 |
| Ethnocentrism | 13 | Social media Stakeholders 9 | 16 |
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## Chapter Outline

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## teaching suggestions

### Learning objective 1

Define communication and describe the main purpose for value of communication in business.

#### Value of Communication

* Communication is critical to satisfy needs in an individual’s private and professional life. Students need to be impressed with the importance of communication to be successful in business. Managers spend up to 80 percent of their time communicating—working in small groups, writing reports, and speaking with employees and clients. Students can talk with working business professionals to get a realistic sense of how many communication activities occur within a given day.
* Companies are successful, in part, only when they communicate effectively—both internally within the company and externally to outside customers and stakeholders. With students, list the many communication-related activities an organization is involved in.

### Learning Objective 2

Explain the communication process model and the ultimate objective of the communication process.

#### The Communication Process

* Build upon students’ own experiences communicating. Ask them to briefly give a definition of communication and draw a picture of how communication happens. Discuss when they have been in a situation where communication went well and situations when it didn’t. Relate their experiences with the Transactional Process Model of Communication.
* Initiate a class discussion to identify breakdowns in the communication process. You may repeat the activity, allowing the speaker to use nonverbal signals and to answer questions from the class. Consider improvements in the communication process and lead students into a discussion of the communication process model. Discuss the importance of context and an audience’s experience in understanding the intended message.

##### Summarize the section by emphasizing the following points:

* Communication is complete only when the message has been understood as it was intended at its destination.
* Although it is not always readily available (as in written communication), feedback normally provides senders with information about the effectiveness of their messages.
* Our ability to understand one another draws upon shared or similar experience.

##### To illustrate the complexity of the communication process, complete the following activity:

* Have a regular sheet of paper for each member of the class. Ask them to shut their eyes and follow the instructions given. No one is to peek or to ask questions. Ask students to fold the paper in half and tear a off a small piece in the lower right-hand corner. Tell them to fold it in half again and tear off the upper left-hand corner. Have them fold it in half one more time and tear off the upper-right hand corner. Tell them to open their eyes and see if anyone has a page that looks like the instructors. Discuss why there are differences, ambiguity in whether the page is held landscape or portrait when folding, how the lack of questions and feedback led to different interpretations, and so forth.
* Ask a student to leave the classroom and make a paper airplane from a single piece of paper or build a model with building blocks. Ask another student to study the design of the airplane. Tell the class that the student will give them instructions for making something from a piece of paper. Vary the activity by having the student create a simple origami object (e.g., paper cup). Complete illustrations are available in origami books you can obtain from the library or on the Internet.
* Ask the student to give the instructions to the class, giving only verbal instructions (no nonverbal cues) and answering no questions from the class.

### Learning Objective 3

Discuss how information flows in an organization.

**Communicating within Organizations**

Because the course is new to most students, vocabulary, theory, and background for later study are introduced here. Major concepts to cover include the following topics:

* The major purpose of communication is to satisfy needs—personal, social, task, or job. Interpersonal communication grows into group communication, which grows into organizational communication as size and complexity lead to different needs.
* Formal organizations are marked by characteristics that call for increases in the amount and effectiveness of communication: specialization of individuals and units and interdependence of individuals and units.
* The concept that all people have task and maintenance goals—get the job done and feel good about themselves—is an important factor in understanding the difference between an externally imposed system and an internally (within the person) generated system.

#### Formal and Informal Communication Networks

* Discuss formal and informal channels of communication in organizations and the importance of the grapevine as an informal communication system.

#### Directions of Communication Flow

* Discuss the directions of communication flow within organizations—upward, downward, and laterally (vertically or horizontally as you view an organizational chart).
* Describe the efforts of organizational managers to exercise control and effective coordination.

**Levels of Communication**

* Differentiate between internal and external messages.
* Review the basic communication levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, and public.
* Discuss examples of each level of communication, providing examples from students’ experiences and from business settings.

### Learning objective 4

Explain how legal and ethical constraints, diversity challenges, team environment, and changing technology influence the process of business communication.

#### Contextual Forces Influencing Business Communication

* Introduce the concept of environmental “contexts” that influence communication.
* Lead a class discussion of changes that have occurred in the business environment over the last 25 years. Solicit comments on changes that have affected the four external factors: legal/ethical issues, diversity challenges, changing technology, and team environment. Summarize with ways that communication has been affected by these changes.

#### Legal and Ethical Constraints

* Initiate a class discussion to arrive at a definition of ethics, which should lead to the principles of right and wrong that guide individuals in making decisions that affect others. Then, to initiate a discussion of the foundation of ethical behavior, ask how people know what’s right and wrong.
* Discuss the ethical issues in the “Ethical Dilemmas . . .” section. Explore how morals and values dictate action.
* Discuss how compromises in personal values can affect a person’s value system. This discussion should lead naturally into a discussion of commonplace unethical behavior in a student’s academic life and in the workplace. Encourage students to contribute other examples from their own experiences. Students’ responses might include the following:
* copying from another student’s test paper to achieve a certain grade point average
* not contributing a fair share to a group project
* plagiarizing on a term paper
* copying a computer software program so class assignments can be completed on one’s own computer rather than in a computer lab
* not reporting a student witnessed cheating on an exam
* listing false qualifications to increase chances of getting a job, scholarship, internship, and so on.

To create immediate interest in the topic and to emphasize the widespread presence of unethical behavior, ask students to locate in a current newspaper or magazine an example of an illegal act or an unethical act.

* Discuss the ethical dilemmas often presented in résumé writing. Discuss the need to be honest on a résumé. (This topic is discussed further in Chapter 13.)
* Initiate class discussion with recent examples from the news (samples follow):
* Bernie Madoff, Ponzi scheme
* AIG, Lucrative exec bonuses
* Tokyo Electrical Power, false report to regulators
* Former Illinois Governor Rod Bladgojevich
* Enron, Worldcom, & HealthSouth, and other financial scandals
* Lance Armstrong’s use of performance enhancing drugs; stripped of Tour de France titles

#### Foundation of for Legal and Ethical Behavior

#### Defining ethics is challenging. Ethics refers to principles of right and wrong that guide decision making. Explore why businesses should make ethical decisions and what difference it makes whether they do or don’t.

#### Causes of Illegal and Unethical Behavior

Emphasize that being aware of the major causes of unethical behavior will assist students in recognizing the forces that can cause unethical behavior. Recognizing the causes of unethical behavior is the first step in making business decisions that may require students to compromise their personal values.

* Discuss the causes of unethical behavior in the workplace and each of the examples provided. To increase relevance, encourage students to share incidents they have experienced or those reported in the newspapers and magazine articles.
* Provide examples to spark ideas.
* *Excessive emphasis on profits*. Ask students to recount other incidents in which ethics were sacrificed for profit.
* *Misplaced corporate loyalty.* Lead students in a discussion of the seductive quality of an unethical environment and potential risks and remedies.
* *Obsession with personal advancement*. Ask students the following question: When does personal ambition become obsessive?
* *Expectation of not getting caught*. Many people think they will never get caught downloading music illegally from the internet. The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) estimates 30 billion songs were downloaded illegally between 2004 and 2009. Explore reasons for downloading illegally and what effective deterrents may be. Additionally, ask students why radar detectors were invented? Is speeding wrong as long as no police are around?
* *Unethical tone set by top management*. This problem is deep-rooted in the corporate culture of some organizations. Corporate culture is extremely difficult to change and can take years. The time factor should, however, not be a deterrent to efforts to bring about an ethical work environment.
* *Uncertainty about whether an action is wrong*. Find current news stories that explore legal and ethical issues. For instance, many manufacturers use third world labor to produce less expensive products. Although legal, discuss such practices and why organizations may want to avoid actions that may be legal but questionable ethically.
* *Unwillingness to take an ethical stand*. Lead a discussion about whistle-blowing and the consequences that result. Have students use an online index to locate a newspaper or magazine article that features whistle-blowers.

#### Framework for Analyzing Ethical Dilemmas

* To introduce the “Four Dimensions of Business Behavior,” lead students in a discussion of ethical principles or systems that would be helpful in determining whether an issue is ethical. This discussion will emphasize that various methods can be used to resolve ethical dilemmas and incorporated into a systematic plan for analyzing ethicality. Having “tools” to use when faced with an ethical dilemma will help students find solutions that better conform to their own personal values.
* Continue your discussion of analyzing ethical dilemmas by walking students through the framework on the resource slide by relating it to an ethical issue that has been in the news—e.g., Bernie Madoff, AIG, Tokyo Electrical Power, Enron, Worldcom, & HealthSouth, and other financial scandals.

#### Diversity Challenges

* Emphasize that people will have to work in, supervise, and manage businesses in a culturally diverse environment. Ask students to identify other areas of diversity: social, educational, geographic, etc. Depending on the cultural mix in your classes, you can do much in the way of relating the chapter to your community.
* Provide examples of U.S. companies that have experienced intercultural blunders:
* EuroDisney is a good example of what can go wrong when a company tries to create a new venture in a foreign country without taking the context of the national culture into consideration. Executives at EuroDisney presumed U.S. company policies would be equally as successful at EuroDisney. Immediate problems occurred: Employees resisted Disney’s disregard for national customs—the unpopular dress code prohibiting facial hair and limiting make-up and jewelry and the no-alcohol-in-the-park policy (the French generally include wine with most meals).
* When Wal-Mart opened a Supercenter in Mexico City, thousands of local residents poured in to see and buy the latest products from the United States. Managers decided to leave the English labels on products when they discovered that Mexican customers actually preferred products in “American” packaging to the ones with Spanish labels. For Mexicans, buying goods from the United States is a mark of status.
* A similar phenomenon occurred in Moscow. When McDonald’s opened its first restaurant in the former Soviet Union, Muscovites took home the styrofoam containers as souvenirs and were willing to stand in line just to sample the food Americans take for granted here.
* Coca-Cola committed an offense similar to McDonald’s when they placed the flags of the 24 nations participating in the World Cup on their packaging. Among the flags was Saudi Arabia’s, which includes sacred words from the Koran. Muslims were incensed, as they believe that holy words should not be used as a sales device, much less on packaging destined for the trash.

#### Communication Opportunities and Challenges in Diversity

* Whether you present a lecture on this section before students read it or whether you conduct a session of questions and answers, lecture, and discussion after they have read the chapter, you should be able to draw on current examples from magazines, newspapers, and television about problems in intercultural communication.

#### Barriers to Intercultural Communication

* Discuss the barriers that can interfere with intercultural communication and suggestions for dealing with them.
* Lead the class in a discussion of the issue of cultural stereotypes. How do movies and television stereotype U.S. citizens? Other cultural groups? Have students to discuss the following scenarios in relation to their school, work, and social lives:
* Interpretation of time: Ask students to share experiences.
* Personal space requirements: Ask students to share experiences.
* Body language: Ask students to share experiences.
* Translation limitations: Ask a student who speaks another language to give an example of an English word for which there is no literal translation into the other language or vice versa.
* Lack of language training: Ask students why the study of foreign languages is not more highly valued in the U.S.
* Have students identify and discuss areas of diversity in the classroom including: age, gender, race, culture, geographic origin, etc.
* Assign students to interview an international student at their institution. Compare challenges international students face living and getting educated at an institution not in their native country.

#### Changing Technology

#### Technology has increased not eliminated the need for effective communication.

* Lead a student discussion about how technology has changed over the last 30 years and what changes are on the horizon.
* Have students brainstorm a list of communication technology products. What are the advantages? Are there disadvantages?
* Discuss what telecommuting/teleworking is. What are the advantages and disadvantages to employers and employees?
* Lead a student discussion of the various databases of which the average citizen is a part. What are the advantages? Discuss benefits of data organization, data integrity, and data security.
* Have students brainstorm tasks for which a spreadsheet is useful. Then have them compile a list of safeguards for proper use of spreadsheets.
* Discuss document production software, electronic presentation tools, web publishing tools, and collaborative software.
* To summarize the various types of information technology needed to ensure a company’s efficiency and effectiveness, have students identify technological solutions to the following dilemmas:
* A memo takes two or three days to get from one department to another.

**Solution**: Use email instead of memos for routine internal messages.

* Sales executives are frustrated about the excessive time spent in air travel for regional product information meetings.

**Solution**: Use videoconferencing instead of traveling to meetings.

* Telephone tag is a problem for many employees.

**Solution**: Use voice mail or email.

* Proposals with misspelled words often reach supervisors.

**Solution**: Require the use of spell check on all word processed documents.

* Information is lost in crowded file cabinets and cannot be retrieved in time to assist in decision making.

**Solution**: Transfer files to electronic databases.

* Co-workers, contractors, and bank loan officers frequently need to reach the vice president of a land development company readily so that they can make or implement decisions. However, reaching the vice president is nearly impossible as he is often away from the home office visiting building sites, meeting with contractors, negotiating bank loans, or traveling between these various locations.

**Solution**: Provide a cellular phone for the vice president.

* Administrative assistants become upset when asked to make changes or revisions in documents because they have to spend hours retyping entire documents.

**Solution**: Use word processing software for the creation of documents.

* A producer in a California film studio is irritated when filming is stopped to wait for a scriptwriter working in a remote location to rewrite and mail a portion of script. These delays are the major cause of a film’s exceeding budget, a common occurrence for this producer recently.

**Solution**: Have the writer fax updated scripts rather than mailing.

#### Team Environment

##### Work Team Defined

* Discuss the influx of the team-oriented approach global business.
* Have students bring in a magazine or newspaper article that describes how teams are being used in a particular business setting.
* Lead a discussion as to what terms are used to describe the teams discussed in the articles. For what tasks and purposes were the teams formed?
* Discuss the concept of synergy and 1+1=3. Focus on how the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts due to the fact that complementary skills of team members result in greater results. Furthermore, creativity is fostered through the exchange of ideas and building on each other’s ideas.

##### Communication Differences in Work Teams

* Lead a discussion in the benefits of work teams. Ask students to list advantages and disadvantages of teams. Encourage students to contribute other examples from their own academic life and workplace experiences.
* Have students refer to the articles located earlier on teams in business settings.
* Discuss what communication issues were different after the formation of teams. Trust, open exchange, shared leadership, listening, problem solving, conflict resolution, and negotiation, among other issues, should likely surface.

##### Maximization of Work Team Effectiveness

* Discuss the skills necessary for successful teams.
* Lead a discussion on gender, cultural, and age differences that can present barriers to team communication.

#### Summary

* Lead students in a discussion of the communication issues of a present-day businessperson and those of a businessperson of 25 years ago. Reflect changes in legal/ethical issues, diversity, technology, and team environment. What issues would be consistent for the two groups? What issues would be different?

## classroom activities

1. ***Shadowing a Manager’s Communication Activities*:** *Shadow a business manager for a day. Keep a log of his/her communication activities for the time period you are observing. Divide the communication activities into the following categories: (1) attending meetings, (2) presenting information to groups, (3) explaining procedures and work assignments, (4) coordinating the work of various employees and departments, (5) evaluating and counseling employees, (6) promoting the company’s products/services and image, and (7) other activities. Calculate the percentage of time spent in each activity. Be prepared to share your results with the class.*

Solicit responses that require thought and reflection from students. Compare the percentage breakdowns calculated by each student.

1. ***Clocking Your Own Communication Activities:*** *Prepare a record of your listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities and time spent in each during the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for the next two days. You should attempt to record the time spent doing each activity for each one-hour time block in such a way that you obtain a total time for each activity. Be prepared to share your distribution with the class.*

This activity illustrates the enormous amount of time we spend communicating and how that time is distributed among various communication activities. A student’s time distribution of communication activities may reinforce studies showing that a manager’s time is distributed as follows: listening, 45 percent; speaking, 30 percent; reading, 15 percent; and writing, 10 percent.

1. ***Communication Barriers:*** *In groups of three, develop a list of 10 to 12 annoying habits of yours or of others that create barriers (verbal and nonverbal) to effective communication. Classify each according to the portion of the communication process it affects. For each, give at least one suggestion for improvement.*

The lists will probably include items related to interrupting the speaker, ignoring the speaker, not looking at the speaker, fidgeting, exercising poor personal habits of cleanliness and mannerisms, passing the buck, getting too far ahead of the speaker, and failing to provide feedback.

1. ***Organizational Communication Flows:*** *Draw an organizational chart to depict the formal system of communication within an organization with which you are familiar. How is the informal system different from the organization chart? How are the five levels of communication achieved in the organization? Be prepared to discuss these points in class.*

Divide students into groups of four to five and instruct them to discuss each student’s analysis of the external and internal communication system of an organization. Then as a group, students should attempt to predict management’s reactions to the recommendations. A group leader could be asked to present a brief report to the class.

1. ***Identifying Ethical Dilemmas:*** *Using an online index, locate a current newspaper or magazine article that describes an illegal or unethical act by a business organization or its employee(s). Choose an incident as closely related as possible to your intended profession. Be prepared to share details of the incident in an informal presentation to the class.*

Selected incidents will vary; the summary may include a reference citation, an overview, discussion of major points, and an application section that summarizes the contribution of the article to individuals or the profession

1. ***Diversity Challenges:*** *Conduct an online search to locate examples of intercultural communication mistakes made by U.S. companies doing business in another country. How can an organization improve its diversity awareness to avoid such problems? Be prepared to share your ideas with the class.*

This assignment encourages students to explore current new ideas and analyze diversity issues. Articles might focus on problems in marketing campaigns, contract negotiations, etc. Improving diversity awareness involves researching the appropriate culture and determining ways to communicate effectively.

1. ***Classroom Diversity Initiative:*** *In your class, locate other students to form a “diverse” group; your diversity may include age (more than five years difference), gender, race, culture, geographic origin, etc. Discuss your areas of diversity; then identify three things the group members all have in common, excluding your school experience. Share your group experiences with the class.*

Use what you have learned about your students to place them in groups with diversity, whether based on age, race, ethnicity, geography, or experience. Experiences will vary from group to group. Students should focus on identifying experiences that are different, whether personal or business related.

1. ***Technology’s Impact on Communication:*** *In pairs, read and discuss an article from a current magazine or journal about how technology is affecting communication. Send your instructor a brief email message discussing the major theme of the article. Include a complete bibliographic entry so the instructor can locate the article. Your instructor will provide directions for setting up an email account and composing and sending an email message.*

The primary purpose of this assignment is to get students online and familiar with course email practices. Students should be able to complete the assignment outside of class and without instructor assistance. The bibliography citation provides application of knowledge that will be developed further in Chapter 9 and on the Style Cards. If you are following the sequence of chapters in the text, students will not yet have been exposed to concepts related to message impact, such as adaptation and strategy. Consequently, evaluation of this assignment should not focus heavily on such factors. Depending on the editing capabilities of your email system, you may grade spelling, grammatical content, and basic formatting.

1. ***Exploring Use of Teams in the Workplace:*** *Using the Internet, locate an article that describes how a company or organization is using teams in its operation. Write a one-page abstract of the article.*

Located articles will vary; the abstracts should focus on how teams are being used in the particular organization. Evaluate for clarity, completeness, and conciseness.

## Review QUESTIONS & Suggested Answers

1. **What are the three purposes for which people communicate? What percentage of a manager’s time is spent communicating? Give examples of the types of communication managers use.**

The three purposes of communication are to inform, to persuade, and to entertain. Managers spend approximately 60 to 80 percent of their time involved in some form of communication, including attending meetings, writing reports, presenting information to groups, explaining and clarifying procedures and work assignments, evaluating and counseling employees, and promoting company products, services, and image. Communication activities in which managers are typically engaged include attending meetings and writing reports related to strategic plans and company policy; presenting information to large and small groups; explaining and clarifying management procedures and work assignments; coordinating the work of various employees, departments, and other work groups; evaluating and counseling employees; and promoting the company’s products/services and image.

1. **Describe the elements of the Transactional Process Model of Communication, the various parts and how interference or barriers impede communication.**

The Transactional Process Model of Communication includes the following.

a. The sender who creates or encodes a message.

b. The message sent to the receiver (includes choices of medium and message channel)

c. The receiver who receives and decodes the message.

d. Sometimes both parties attempt to communicate simultaneously, as in face-to-face communication.

e. Interferences or barriers may hinder the communication process.

1. **How is the formal flow of communication different from the informal flow of communication?**

The formal flow follows obvious organizational lines. The informal flow is sometimes referred to as the grapevine because it does not follow predictable lines of flow.

1. **What is the difference between intrapersonal and interpersonal communication?**

Intrapersonal is the communication that occurs within a person as the person processes information; interpersonal communication occurs between or among people.

1. **What are some common causes of unethical behavior in the workplace?**

The common causes of unethical behavior in the workplace are (a) excessive emphasis on profits, (b) misplaced corporate loyalty, (c) obsession with personal advancement, (d) expectation of not getting caught, (e) unethical tone set by top management, (f) uncertainty about whether an action is wrong, and (g) unwillingness to take an ethical stand.

1. **Describe several intercultural communication barriers and how they might be overcome.**

Intercultural barriers include stereotypes, differences in the interpretation of time, differing personal space requirements, body language, translation limitations, and lack of language training. Strategies for overcoming these barriers include learning about the other person’s culture, having patience with yourself and the other person, and getting help in the form of resources when needed.

1. **What aspect of cultural diversity do you feel will impact you most in your career: international, intercultural, intergenerational, or gender? Explain your answer, including how you plan to deal with the challenge.**

Answers will vary, but student responses should focus on one of the three listed here, using concepts from the chapter to defend their answers. For example, if intergenerational issues arise, students could talk with relatives of the same generation as co-workers to obtain suggestions about how to communicate more effectively.

1. **Describe several ways that communication technology can assist individuals and organizations.**

Communication technology can assist individuals and organizations in collecting and analyzing data, shaping messages to be clearer and more effective, and communicating quickly and efficiently over long distances.

1. **What legal and ethical concerns are raised over the use of technology?**

Concerns raised over the use of technology include information ownership issues, access to information issues, and threats to privacy.

1. **How does communication in work teams differ from that of traditional organizations?**

Communication in work teams differs from that in traditional organizations in that communication patterns are different; trust is a primary factor; open meetings are the norm; shared leadership exists; and listening, problem solving, conflict resolution, and negotiation are important factors.

1. **Why has communication been identified as perhaps the single most important aspect of team work?**

Communication has been identified as perhaps the most important aspect of team work because open lines of communication are essential to increasing interaction between employees and management as well as horizontally among team members, with other teams, and with supervisors.

## Featured assignments

1. ***Writing About Your Team Orientation:*** *Take the team player quiz at the Monster career site and write a brief paper about their team orientation and how being a team player may affect their career success.*

Student scores for the team player quiz will vary, but papers (or class discussion) should focus on team collaboration, self-directiveness, mutual respect, team achievements, complementary skills, and empowerment.

1. ***Analyzing an Ethical*** ***Dilemma:*** *Research a scandal in the business or popular press using campus resources. Read the article and respond to the following questions:*
2. *Who are the stakeholders in the case? What does each stand to gain or lose, depending on your decision?*
3. *How does the situation described in the case relate to the four-dimension model shown in Figure 1–4?*
4. *What factors might influence your decision as the manager in the case?*

Students’ answers will vary depending on the article(s) they select.

1. ***Intercultural Interview:*** *Assemble a group of three and interview an international student at your institution. Generate a list of English words that have no equivalents in his or her language. You should also find out about nonverbal communication that may differ from that used in American culture. Be prepared to share your findings in a short presentation to the class.*

In completing this assignment, students will interact firsthand with a person of a cultural background different from their own. The translation issue will raise awareness of the communication challenges faced in global business activity.

1. ***Communication Failure:*** *Assemble a group and discuss experiences where “communication failure” was blamed for problems that occurred in your work, academic, or personal interactions. Generate three to five additional ways communication can fail, with suggestions for correcting them. Your instructor may ask you to share your results in a short presentation.*

Five reasons communications fail:

* It’s not my responsibility: Employees don’t want to shoulder responsibility for others’ tasks, even at the expense of customer service. Article suggests making a “hard and fast rule” that all employees are responsible for making sure customer issues are resolved.
* I just assumed: Never make assumptions. Ask questions so that all information is clear.
* I think so: Don’t be lazy. If you don’t know, find out the correct information and use it.
* If it’s not in writing, it’s not real: If you want something to absolutely be completed a certain way, write it down.
* Lack of follow-through: When communication difficulties arise, take care of business yourself and don’t depend on someone else. If you have someone to aid in resolving this, use that person, but only after completely briefing him or her on the situation.

Answers for additional ways communication can fail will vary.

## Additional assignments

1. ***Miscommunication Cause and Solution:*** *Identify and describe a miscommunication that you have had with a fellow college student, friend, family member, co-worker, or representative of a company with which you have dealt. Explain the source or cause of the communication. Was it due to some type of interference? Or was it a problem with encoding? What feedback might you have given to eliminate the problem?*

Some of the interferences that may occur at various stages of the communication process include:

* Differences in educational level, experience, culture, and other characteristics of the sender and the receiver increase the complexity of encoding and decoding a message.
* Physical interferences occurring in the channel include a noisy environment, interruptions, and uncomfortable surroundings.
* Mental distractions, such as preoccupation with other matters and developing a response rather than listening.

Various behaviors can cause breakdowns in the communication process at the encoding stage, such as when the sender uses:

* Words not present in the receiver’s vocabulary.
* Ambiguous, nonspecific ideas that distort the message.
* Nonverbal signals that contradict the verbal message.
* Expressions, such as “uh” or grammatical errors, mannerisms (excessive hand movements, jingling keys), or dress styles that distract the receiver.

Feedback that might help to resolve some of these challenges include asking questions to ensure clarity of understanding and/or providing nonverbal signals that convey the same message.

1. ***Formal Network Flows:*** *Identify an organization with which you are part. This organization can be your workplace, or a church, sports, or university organization in which you participate. Try to identify the formal network flows that are dominant in the organization. Does organization primarily flow upward, horizontally, or downward? Based upon this observation, can you see ways that network flow might be improved and its benefits to the organization?*

Answers should indicate a correct understanding of upward, downward and horizontal communication flows and how each can help to improve communication within an organization.

**Downward communication** flows from supervisor to employee, from policy makers to operating personnel, or from top to bottom on the organization chart. A simple policy statement from the top of the organization may grow into a formal plan for operation at lower levels. Teaching people how to perform their specific tasks is an element of downward communication. Another element is orienting employees to a company’s rules, practices, procedures, history, and goals. Employees also learn about the quality of their job performance through downward communication.

**Upward communication**generally is feedback to downward communication. Accurate upward communication keeps management informed about the feelings of lower-level employees, taps the expertise of employees, helps management identify both difficult and potentially promotable employees, and paves the way for even more effective downward communication.

**Horizontal** or **lateral communication**describes interactions between organizational units on the same hierarchical level. Horizontal communication is the primary means of achieving coordination in a functional organizational structure.

1. ***History and Development of Your Career Field:*** *Research the history and development of your chosen career field as well as some of the companies and organizations that offer employment in that area. How have their business practices changed over the years? What has been the effect of technology on the organization(s)? What has been the effect of globalization? Has the legal environment changed in such a way as to affect its practices and communication?*

Ideally, responses would demonstrate an understanding of some of the strategic forces issues related to technology, globalization and the legal environment that are discussed in the chapter. International, federal, state, and local laws affect the way that various business activities can be conducted and are a starting point for proper business communication. Globalization often involves dealing with businesses and persons in other cultures. Such diversity in the workplace is another strategic force influencing communication. Electronic tools have not eliminated the need for basic communication skills; they can, in fact, create new obstacles or barriers to communication that must be overcome. A variety of issues related to these three topics might be addressed in the response to the assignment.

## case assignment 1

### Can the United States Succeed Without Rewarding Rugged Individuality?

A basic element of the fabric of U.S. entrepreneurship is the faith in the ingenuity of the individual person’s ability to conceive, develop, and profit from a business endeavor. The frontier spirit and triumph of the individual over looming odds have been a predominant force in the development of the United States. Such individualism has also been recognized by organizations, with reward going to those who contribute winning ideas and efforts.

The recent shift in organizational structures toward team design has caused management to reassess reward systems that focus on individual recognition and to consider rewards that are based on team performance. Some fear that removing individual incentive will lead to mediocrity and a reduction in personal effort. They argue that while the team model might work in other cultures, it is inconsistent with the U.S. way of thinking and living. According to Madelyn Hoshstein, president of DYG Inc., a New York firm that researches corporate trends, America is moving away from the model of team building in which everyone is expected to do everything and toward focusing on employees who are the best at what they do. She describes this change as a shift toward social Darwinism and away from egalitarianism, in which everyone has equal economic, political, and social rights.

Team advocates say that teams are here to stay and liken those who deny that reality to the proverbial ostrich with its head in the sand. They stress the need for newly structured incentive plans to reward group effort.

#### Sources: Kidwell, Roland E. "Loafing in the 21st century: Enhanced opportunities and remediation for withholding job effort in the new workplace." Business horizons 53.6 (2010):543-552. Pounds, M.H. (1996, April 12). New breed of executive is ruthless, highly paid. *Sun Sentinel* (Fort Lauderdale), p. 1F.

"Declining unionization calls for re-envisioning workplace relations." States News Service (2011)

#### Questions

1. **How would you respond to those with concerns about loss of individual incentive? Argue for or against the increased emphasis on team reward, using either personal examples or examples from business.**

Arguments in favor of increased emphasis on team reward include: (a) team reward encourages synergistic results that surpass what solo individuals can achieve; (b) team reward encourages cooperation rather than competition. Arguments against emphasis on team reward include: (a) contribution of team members is never completely equal, so reward should be to the individual; and (b) mediocrity results from team reward, since individuals are not challenged to rise above the norm.

1. **Structure a reward system that would recognize both individual and team performance. You may use an organization of your choice to illustrate.**

A possible reward system would include the following elements for each team member: a percentage of merit based on team performance, a percentage from team member appraisals, and a percentage from the supervisor.

1. **Select a specific corporation or nation that has implemented the team model. Describe the transition away from a hierarchical structure and the consequences that have resulted from the shift, both positive and negative.**

Organizations selected will vary. Focus on how well the student described the transition from hierarchical structure to teams and positive and negative consequences that resulted. If you are following the sequence of chapters in the text, students will not yet have been exposed to concepts related to message impact, such as adaptation and strategy. Consequently, evaluation of this assignment should not focus heavily on such factors.

## case assignment 2

Your state’s Department of Transportation, in concert with the Governor’s Office, has proposed a master plan for the expansion of Interstate highway between two major cities in your state. The freeway currently has four lanes and will be expanded to six lanes. Two approaches have been proposed: (1) take two years, close major sections of the road during off hours, and complete the work quickly, or (2) take seven years, keep two lanes of traffic open at all times, impacting local businesses and residents less. Some feel the seven year estimate is conservative for the project, especially with over 100 bridges and overpasses needing significant work as well. The decision has been made to follow option 1. Prepare a communication plan (list types and frequency of communication messages that would be appropriate to develop), and be prepared to respond to potential concerns business owners and the public may have in a press conference to be held where the decision will be announced.

You are now in a public meeting with a group of citizens responding to their concerns.

**Questions**

1. **Who are potential audiences or groups who would be concerned about the decision?**

Answers may vary, but residents of the area, commuters who use the road regularly, business owners in the area whose business could be affected by inaccessibility, destination spots on either side of the constructions whose access could be limited.

1. **What communication messages would be appropriate for a variety of the audiences?**

Televised press conference, local informational meetings, mailings to affected business owners, billboards that focus on advantages of the temporary disadvantages, information on Department of Transportation websites, and real-time updates of traffic congestion via the Internet during the projects and alternate routes.

1. **Divide the class into groups that develop responses to the hard questions that may be asked at a press conference. Remind students of the following in creating responses: acknowledge the emotion, restate the concern expressed, stay cool and composed and avoid arguing or debating, identify the value or principle that is the basis of person’s question or feelings. Have groups share responses to the questions.**

**a. I own a small business in just out of Detroit in front of where the traffic will be diverted. I barely make it now. The Chamber of Commerce says that the increased traffic will cost me 30% of my walk-in business. What are you going to do to keep me from going into bankruptcy?**

**b. Isn’t it true that the governor doesn’t really care about the state as much as she cares about furthering her political career? I think the Commission is just trying to put on a pretty face to further the governor’s political career. What’s she promised the Commission?**

**c. My grandchildren live just an hour away up the freeway. They’ve been the joy of our life. Now, they'll be three hours away. I can’t drive three hours any more, especially in construction traffic. Is this how your administration plans on treating senior citizens—cutting them off from their families?**

**d. I own a small company and was thinking of putting a new office just twenty miles up the freeway. Now I can't because I don't dare run the risks associated with the three-hour traffic jam. I thought you were pro-business!**