Business
Communication
Foundations

Unit 1
Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to
1. Explain what effective communication is
2. Discuss five developments in the workplace that are intensifying the need to communicate effectively
3. List and briefly define the six phases of the communication process
4. Identify four ways to improve business communication
5. Differentiate between an ethical dilemma and an ethical lapse
6. Define and briefly discuss four types of cultural differences that can affect communication

Microsoft’s Robert Scoble was among the first business professionals to recognize the revolutionary impact that blogging, the practice of writing online journals, was going to have on business communication. In sharp contrast to traditional corporate communications, which can come across as impersonal, remote, and even defensive, Scoble’s blog is highly personal and quite candid. He even links to blogs that criticize his employer. The online conversation may not always be comfortable from Microsoft’s perspective, but that drawback is far outweighed by the value of maintaining effective communication between the company and its customers.

Succeeding Through Effective Communication

Professionals such as Robert Scoble understand that achieving success in today’s workplace requires the ability to communicate effectively with a wide variety of audiences. Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages. During your career, you’ll communicate with a wide range of audiences. Internal communication refers to the exchange of information and ideas within an organization. You will receive numerous messages from colleagues and supervisors, and you’ll be expected to convey information to audiences throughout the company as well. In contrast, external communication carries information into and out of the organization. Companies constantly exchange messages with customers, vendors, distributors, competitors, investors, journalists, and community representatives.
Effective communication delivers a variety of important benefits.

For any audience, communication is effective only when the message is understood and when it stimulates action or encourages the audience to think in new ways. Effective communication yields a number of important benefits for both you and your company:

- Quicker problem solving
- Stronger decision making
- Increased productivity
- Steadier workflow
- Stronger business relationships
- More compelling promotional messages
- Enhanced professional image
- Improved response from colleagues, employees, supervisors, investors, customers, and other important audiences

People aren’t “born” writers or speakers. The more they write and speak, the more their skills improve. This course teaches you how to create effective messages and helps you improve your communication skills through practice in an environment that provides honest, constructive criticism. By working hard in this course to improve your communication skills, you’ll gain a distinct advantage in today’s job market.

No matter what career you pursue, this course will help you discover how to collaborate in teams, listen well, master nonverbal communication, and participate in productive meetings. You’ll learn about communicating across cultural boundaries. You’ll learn a three-step process that makes it easier to write effective business messages, and you’ll get specific tips for writing a wide variety of messages, from e-mail and instant messages to blogs to online presentations. Plus, you’ll learn how to write effective résumés and job application letters and how to handle employment interviews. Throughout this book, you’ll see numerous examples with helpful comments to guide you through your own communication efforts.

**Preparing for Today’s Dynamic Workplace**

Good communication skills are more vital today than ever before because people need to adapt to a workplace that is constantly changing. Effective communication will help you meet challenges such as advances in technology, the need to manage vast amounts of information, the growth of globalization and workforce diversity, and the increasing use of teams in the workplace.

- **Communicating amid advancing technology.** From instant messaging (IM) and blogs to wireless networks and video-enabled mobile phones, technology has revolutionized the way businesspeople communicate. Used intelligently, these tools can increase the speed, reach, and effectiveness of your communication efforts and enable you to collaborate with others virtually anywhere on Earth, any time of the day. Figure 1.1 provides an example of effective communication using e-mail. In almost every aspect of business these days, you’ll be expected not only to communicate well but to do so using a variety of communication technologies.

- **Communicating in the age of information.** In today’s workplace, you must know how to find, evaluate, process, and share information effectively and efficiently. Plus, you must be able to use what information you receive to make strong, speedy decisions. Unfortunately, people are so inundated with information today that they tend to ignore messages they see as less important. Your challenge is to get your audience’s attention so that they will read and respond to your messages.

- **Communicating globally and within a culturally diverse workforce.** Chances are good that your business career will require you to communicate across national or
FIGURE 1.1 Technology and Communication: Effective E-Mail

Notice how this message is more formal and “professional sounding” than the e-mail messages you probably send to your friends and family. Except for short messages between close colleagues and team members, most businesses will expect you to communicate with a style that is more formal than the style to which you are currently accustomed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helps people grasp key content immediately by using an informative subject line</th>
<th>Fills in missing information so that everyone can grasp the importance of the message; reminds readers what IM stands for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses a friendly greeting without being too casual</td>
<td>Makes a specific request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizes the importance of the meeting</td>
<td>Invites questions ahead of time so that they don’t derail the meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers remote workers a chance to participate, without making anyone feel guilty about it (WebEx is an online meeting system)</td>
<td>Closes with a warm, personal tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides additional information and alternative contact options by including an e-mail signature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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cultural borders. For instance, of the top ten export markets for U.S. products, only two (Canada and Great Britain) have English as an official language, and Canada has two official languages, English and French.² Within the United States, some companies and brands that you may think of as American (including Ben & Jerry’s, Dr. Pepper, Pillsbury, Carnation, and Shell Oil) are in fact owned by organizations based in other countries.³ Moreover, the workforce in both the United States and other countries is becoming more diverse as countries look worldwide for talent and employees look worldwide for opportunities. To communicate effectively with these varied audiences, you’ll have the challenge of understanding other people’s backgrounds, personalities, and perceptions.

- **Communicating in team-based organizations.** Many successful companies today no longer limit decisions to a few managers at the top of a formal hierarchy. These organizations use teams and flexible industry partnerships to collaborate and make fast decisions. As Chapter 2 discusses in detail, before you can function in a team-based organization, you must understand how groups interact. You must be a good listener and correctly interpret the nonverbal cues you receive from others. Such interaction requires a basic understanding of the communication process in organizational settings.
Understanding the Communication Process

Communication is a dynamic, two-way process that can be broken down into six phases (see Figure 1.2):

1. **The sender has an idea.** You conceive an idea and want to share it.
2. **The sender encodes the idea.** You decide on the message's form (words, facial expressions, gestures, illustrations, and so on), length, organization, tone, and style—all of which depend on your idea, your audience, and your personal style or mood.
3. **The sender transmits the message.** To transmit your message to the receiver, you select a communication channel such as the telephone, a letter, an e-mail—even a facial gesture. This choice of channel depends on your message, your audience's location, the media available to you, your need for speed, and the formality required.
4. **The receiver gets the message.** Unfortunately, you have no guarantee that your message will actually get through. The receiver may not hear you, or your e-mail might get caught in an antispam filter. In fact, one of the biggest challenges you'll face as a communicator in today's crowded business environment is cutting through clutter and noise.
5. **The receiver decodes the message.** Your receiver tries to extract your idea from the message in a form that he or she can understand, a step known as decoding. If all goes well, the receiver interprets your message correctly, assigning the same meaning to your words as you intended.
6. **The receiver sends feedback.** After decoding your message, the receiver has the option of responding in some way. This feedback enables you to evaluate the effectiveness of your message: Feedback often initiates another cycle through the process, which can continue until both parties are satisfied with the result. Successful communicators place considerable value on feedback, not only as a way to measure effectiveness but also as a way to learn.

Be aware that this is a simplified model; real-life communication is usually more complicated. For instance, both the sender and receiver might be talking at the same time, or the receiver might be trying to talk on the phone with one person while instant messaging with another.
Building Your Business Communication Skills

In the coming chapters, you'll find real-life examples of both effective and ineffective communication, with clear explanations to help you recognize what is good or bad about them. You'll notice that five themes keep surfacing as keys to good communication: (1) committing to ethical communication, (2) adopting an audience-centered approach, (3) improving your intercultural sensitivity, (4) improving your workplace sensitivity, and (5) using communication technology effectively. Close attention to these themes will help you improve your business communication skills.

Committing to Ethical Communication

Ethics are the accepted principles of conduct that govern behavior within a society. Put another way, ethical principles define the boundary between right and wrong. Former Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart defined ethics as “knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is the right thing to do.” To make the right choices as a business communicator you have a responsibility to think through not only what you say but also the consequences of saying it.

Of course, people in a society don’t always agree on what constitutes ethical behavior. For instance, the emergence of stealth marketing, in which customers don’t know they’re being marketed to, has raised new concerns about ethics. A common stealth marketing technique is paying consumers (or offering them insider information and other benefits) to promote products to their friends without telling them it’s a form of advertising. Critics complain that such techniques are deceptive because they don’t give their targets the opportunity to raise their instinctive defenses against the persuasive powers of marketing messages.

Ethical communication includes all relevant information, is true in every sense, and is not deceptive in any way. By contrast, unethical communication can include falsehoods and misleading information (or exclude important information). Some examples of unethical communication include:

- **Plagiarism.** Stealing someone else’s words or work and claiming it as your own
- **Selective misquoting.** Deliberately omitting damaging or unflattering comments to paint a better (but untruthful) picture of you or your company
- **Misrepresenting numbers.** Increasing or decreasing numbers, exaggerating, altering statistics, or omitting numerical data
- **Distorting visuals.** Making a product look bigger or changing the scale of graphs and charts to exaggerate or conceal differences

On the surface, ethical practices appear fairly easy to recognize, but deciding what is ethical can be a considerable challenge in complex business situations.

Recognizing Ethical Choices

Every company has responsibilities to multiple groups of people inside and outside the firm, and those various groups often have competing interests. For instance, employees generally want higher wages and more benefits, but investors who have risked their money in the company want management to keep costs low so profits are strong enough to drive up the stock price. Both sides have a valid position; neither one is “right” nor “wrong.”

An ethical dilemma involves choosing among alternatives that aren’t clear-cut. Perhaps two conflicting alternatives are both ethical and valid, or perhaps the alternatives lie somewhere in the gray area between clearly right and clearly wrong. Suppose you are president of a company that’s losing money, You have a duty to your shareholders to try to reduce your losses and a duty to your employees to be fair and honest. After looking at various options, you conclude that you’ll have to lay off 500 people immediately. You suspect you may have to lay off another 100 people later on, but right now you need those
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100 workers to finish a project. What do you tell them? If you confess that their jobs are shaky, many of them may quit just when you need them most. However, if you tell them that the future is rosy, you'll be stretching the truth.

Unlike a dilemma, an ethical lapse is a clearly unethical (and frequently illegal) choice. For instance, several insurance companies were recently accused of misleading military personnel at Fort Benning in Georgia, Camp Pendleton in California, and other bases around the country. Many of these young men and women thought they were signing up for savings programs when in fact they were buying extremely expensive and frequently unnecessary life insurance policies. The policies were often sold during mandatory financial training sessions for the soldiers, who were given no time to read the documents they signed. After the situation was brought to national attention by the New York Times and other news media, at least two of the companies involved, Madison National Life Insurance Company and American Amicable Life Insurance, began issuing full refunds.

Making Ethical Choices

Ensuring ethical business communications requires three elements: ethical individuals, ethical company leadership, and the appropriate policies and structures to support ethical decision making. Many companies establish an explicit ethics policy by using a written code of ethics to help employees determine what is acceptable. A code is often part of a larger program of employee training and communication channels that allows employees to ask questions and report instances of questionable ethics. For example, United Technologies, a large aerospace and defense company based in Hartford, Connecticut, offers employees, customers, and suppliers a confidential way to report suspected fraud and other ethical concerns. People who share their concerns receive a written response that explains how the situation was resolved.

If you find yourself in a situation in which the law or your employer’s code of ethics can’t provide sufficient guidance, ask yourself the following questions:

- Have you defined the situation fairly and accurately?
- What is your intention in communicating this message?
- What impact will this message have on the people who receive it, or who might be affected by it?
- Will the message achieve the greatest possible good while doing the least possible harm?
- Will the assumptions you’ve made change over time? That is, will a decision that seems ethical now seem unethical in the future?
- Are you comfortable with your decision? Would you be embarrassed if it were printed in tomorrow’s newspaper or spread across the Internet? Would you be proud to describe your choice to someone you admire and respect?

One helpful way to make sure your messages are ethical is to consider your audience: What does your audience need? What will help your audience the most?

Adopting an Audience-Centered Approach

Adopting an audience-centered approach means focusing on and caring about the members of your audience—making every effort to get your message across in a way that is meaningful and respectful to them. In addition to being an excellent demonstration of using technology effectively, the blog posting in Figure 1.3 is a great example of audience-centered communication.

An important element of audience-centered communication is etiquette, the expected norms of behavior in a particular situation. In today’s hectic, competitive world, the notion of etiquette might seem outdated and unimportant. However, the way you conduct yourself can have a profound influence on your company’s success and your career. When executives hire and promote you, they expect your behavior to protect the company’s reputation. The more you understand such expectations, the better chance you have of avoiding career-damaging mistakes.
FIGURE 1.3  Audience-Centered Communication

After an upgrade to its TypePad blog-hosting system resulted in a period of poor performance for customers, Six Apart's Mena Trott and her colleagues communicated openly and honestly. They explained what happened, acknowledged customer frustrations, apologized for the inconvenience, offered compensation, and kept their audience up to date. Trott and her colleagues even shared what the experience had taught them as managers and communicators—insights that can help customers handle their own business communication challenges.

Effective business communicators take cultural differences into account.

Improving Your Intercultural Sensitivity

To communicate more effectively, be aware of and sensitive to cultural differences. Culture is a shared system of symbols, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, and norms for behavior. The interaction of culture and communication is so pervasive that separating the two is virtually impossible. The way you communicate—from the language you speak and the nonverbal signals you send to the way you perceive other people—is influenced by the culture in which you were raised. The meaning of words, the
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Improve your cultural sensitivity by
- Recognizing cultural differences
- Overcoming the tendency to stereotype
- Polishing your written intercultural communication skills
- Polishing your oral intercultural communication skills

Cultural differences exist in areas such as context, ethics, social custom, and nonverbal communication.

Cultural context includes physical cues, environmental stimuli, and varying degrees of implicit understanding.

Low-Context Cultures
- Executive offices are separate with controlled access.
- Workers rely on detailed background information.
- Information is highly centralized and controlled.
- Objective data are valued over subjective relationships.
- Business and social relationships are discrete.
- Competence is valued as much as position and status.
- Meetings have fixed agendas and plenty of advance notice.

High-Context Cultures
- Executive offices are shared and open to all.
- Workers do not expect or want detailed information.
- Information is shared with everyone.
- Subjective relationships are valued over objective data.
- Business and social relationships overlap.
- Position and status are valued much more than competence.
- Meetings are often called on short notice, and key people always accept.

Recognizing Cultural Differences

Problems often arise when we assume that other people’s attitudes and lives are like ours. Start by unlearning the “Golden Rule” you were probably taught as a child, to treat others as you would want them to treat you. Instead, treat others the way they want to be treated, not the way you want to be treated. More specifically, you can improve intercultural sensitivity by recognizing and accommodating cultural differences in such areas as context, law and ethics, social customs, and nonverbal communication.

Cultural Context

Every attempt at communication occurs within a cultural context, the pattern of physical cues, environmental stimuli, and implicit understanding that convey meaning between two members of the same culture. However, cultures around the world vary widely in the role that context plays in communication (see Figure 1.4).

In a high-context culture such as South Korea or Taiwan, people rely less on verbal communication and more on the context of nonverbal actions and environmental setting to convey meaning. For instance, a Chinese speaker expects the receiver to discover the essence of a message and uses indirectness and metaphor to provide a web of meaning. In high-context cultures, the rules of everyday life are rarely explicit; instead, as individuals grow up, they learn how to recognize situational cues (such as gestures and tone of voice) that indicate how to act or communicate.

Cultural differences can have a profound effect on business communication. Bear in mind that this is a simplified model; individuals and companies within a given culture can vary widely along the high-context to low-context continuum.

Figure 1.4 How Cultural Context Affects Business Communication

Cultural differences can have a profound effect on business communication. Bear in mind that this is a simplified model; individuals and companies within a given culture can vary widely along the high-context to low-context continuum.

In Low-Context Cultures
- Executive offices are separate with controlled access.
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- Executive offices are shared and open to all.
- Workers do not expect or want detailed information.
- Information is shared with everyone.
- Subjective relationships are valued over objective data.
- Business and social relationships overlap.
- Position and status are valued much more than competence.
- Meetings are often called on short notice, and key people always accept.

Learn the significance of gestures, the importance of time and space, the rules of human relationships—these and many other aspects of communication are defined by culture. To a large degree, your culture influences the way you think, which naturally affects the way you communicate as both a sender and a receiver. In other words, achieving intercultural communication is much more complicated than simply matching language between sender and receiver. It goes beyond mere language to beliefs, values, and emotions.

You can improve your ability to communicate effectively across cultures by recognizing such cultural differences, by overcoming your tendency to judge others based on your own standards, by polishing your written intercultural skills, and by polishing your oral intercultural skills.

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of voice) and how to respond as expected. Also, in a high-context culture, the primary role of communication is building relationships, not exchanging information.

In a low-context culture such as the United States or Germany, people rely more on verbal communication and less on circumstances and cues to convey meaning. An English speaker feels responsible for transmitting the meaning of the message and often places sentences in chronological sequence to establish a cause-and-effect pattern. In a low-context culture, rules and expectations are usually spelled out through explicit statements such as “Please wait until I’m finished” or “You’re welcome to browse.” Exchanging information is the primary task of communication in low-context cultures.

Legal and Ethical Differences Legal and ethical behaviors are also affected by cultural context. For example, because members of low-context cultures value the written word, they consider written agreements binding. They also tend to view laws with flexibility. However, members of high-context cultures put less emphasis on the written word and consider personal pledges more important than contracts. Plus, they tend to adhere more strictly to the law.

Legal systems differ from culture to culture. In the United Kingdom and the United States, someone is presumed innocent until proved guilty, a principle rooted in English common law. However, in Mexico and Turkey, someone is presumed guilty until proved innocent, a principle rooted in the Napoleonic code. These distinctions are particularly important if your firm must communicate about a legal dispute in another country.

Making ethical choices can be difficult within your own culture. But trying to make these choices across cultures can seem incredibly complicated. When communicating across cultures, keep your messages ethical by applying four basic principles:

- Actively seek mutual ground. Both parties must be flexible and avoid insisting that an interaction take place strictly in terms of one culture or another.
- Send and receive messages without judgment. Both parties must recognize that values vary from culture to culture, and they must find a way to trust each other.
- Send messages that are honest. Both parties must see a situation as it is—not as they would like it to be. They must be fully aware of their personal and cultural biases.
- Show respect for cultural differences. Both parties must understand and acknowledge the other’s needs and preserve each other’s dignity by communicating without deception.

Social Customs The nature of social behavior varies among cultures, sometimes dramatically. These behaviors are guided by rules. Some rules are formal and specifically articulated (table manners are a good example), and some are informal, learned over time (such as the comfortable standing distance between two speakers in an office or the acceptability of male and female employees socializing outside of work). The combination of formal and informal rules influences the overall behavior of everyone in a society, or at least most of the people most of the time, in such areas as manners, attitudes toward time, individual versus community values, and attitudes toward status and wealth. For example, the predominant U.S. view is that money solves many problems, that material comfort is a sign of superiority and is earned by individual effort, and that people who work hard are better than those who don’t. But other cultures condemn materialism, some prize communal effort above that of the individual, and some value a more carefree lifestyle.

Nonverbal Communication Nonverbal communication is a vital part of the communication process. Everything from facial expressions to style of dress can influence the way receivers decode messages, and the interpretation of nonverbal signals can vary widely from culture to culture. For instance, a gesture that communicates good luck in Brazil is the equivalent of giving someone “the finger” in Colombia. In fact, the area of gestures in intercultural communication is so complicated that entire books have been written...
about it. Don’t assume that the gestures you grew up with will translate to another culture; doing so could lead to embarrassing mistakes. You’ll learn more about nonverbal communication in Chapter 2.

**Overcoming Ethnocentrism and Stereotyping**

**Ethnocentrism** is the tendency to judge all other groups according to the standards, behaviors, and customs of one’s own group. When making such comparisons, people too often decide that their own group is superior. An even more extreme reaction is **xenophobia**, a fear of strangers and foreigners. Clearly, businesspeople who take these views will not interpret messages from other cultures correctly, nor are they likely to send successful messages.

Distorted views of other cultures or groups also result from **stereotyping**, assigning a wide range of generalized attributes to an individual on the basis of membership in a particular culture or social group, without considering the individual’s unique characteristics. For instance, assuming that an older colleague will be out of touch with the youth market or that a younger colleague can’t be an inspiring leader is an example of stereotyping age groups.

Those who want to show respect for other people and to communicate effectively in business need to adopt a more positive viewpoint, in the form of **cultural pluralism**—the practice of accepting multiple cultures on their own terms. When crossing cultural boundaries, you’ll be even more effective if you move beyond simple acceptance and adapt your own communication style to that of the new cultures you encounter—even integrating aspects of those cultures into your own. A few simple habits can help you avoid both the negativity of ethnocentrism and the oversimplification of stereotyping:

- **Avoid assumptions.** Don’t assume that others will act the same way you do, that they will operate from the same values and beliefs, or that they will use language and symbols the same way you do.
- **Avoid judgments.** When people act differently, don’t conclude that they are in error, that their way is invalid, or that their customs are inferior to your own.
- **Acknowledge distinctions.** Don’t ignore the differences between another person’s culture and your own.

Unfortunately, overcoming ethnocentrism and stereotyping is no simple task, even for people who are highly motivated to do so. You may need to change patterns of beliefs that you’ve had your entire life and even change the way you view yourself and your culture. Moreover, recent research suggests that people often have beliefs and biases that they’re not even consciously aware of—and that may even conflict with the beliefs they think they have. (To see if you might have some of these **implicit beliefs** visit the Project Implicit website at [https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit) and take some of the simple online tests.)

**Polishing Your Written Intercultural Skills**

The letter in Figure 1.5 communicates across cultures quite effectively. To help you prepare effective written communications for multicultural audiences, remember these tips:

- **Use plain English.** Use short, precise words that say exactly what you mean.
- **Be clear.** Rely on specific terms and concrete examples to explain your points.
- **Address international correspondence properly.** The order and layout of address information vary from country to country, so follow the conventions that appear in the company’s letterhead.
- **Cite numbers carefully.** Use figures (27) instead of spelling them out (twenty-seven).
- **Avoid slang, idioms, jargon, and abbreviations.** Words and phrases that you consider to be everyday language may in fact be nonstandard usage and difficult for your audience to translate.
- **Be brief.** Construct sentences that are short and simple.

Important tips for improving your intercultural writing include using plain English, avoiding slang, and using short sentences and short paragraphs.
Follows French preferences for title and address format
Addresses the reader more formally in the salutation, as is expected in most French correspondence
Uses clear and conventional language that is easier for non-native English speakers
Provides a total of the extra expenses
Indicates that additional materials are enclosed with the letter

FIGURE 1.5 Effective Intercultural Letter
This letter from a U.S. sales representative to an accounting manager in a French company is a good example of successfully adapting to an audience in another culture.

Dear Monsieur Coll:

Enclosed are my expense statement and receipts for March 2007. My expenses are higher than usual this month because an unexpected snowstorm that closed the airport in Chicago left me stranded for nearly five days. I was able to get a hotel for the duration of the storm, although the only room available was far more expensive than my usual accommodations.

In addition to the regular expenses identified in the enclosed report, here are the additional expenditures caused by the weather delay:

Three nights at the Carlton-O’Hare Hotel $ 877
Meals over four days 175
Transportation between hotel and terminal 72
Phone calls to reschedule meetings 38

Total extra expenses $1,162

If you have any questions or need any more information about these expenses, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Troy Halford
U.S. Sales Rep

Enclosures: Expense statement and receipts

Use short paragraphs. Each paragraph should stick to one topic.
Use transitional elements. Help readers follow your train of thought.

Polishing Your Oral Intercultural Skills

When speaking in English to people who speak English as a second language, you may find these tips helpful:

Try to eliminate noise. Pronounce words clearly, stop at distinct punctuation points, and make one point at a time.

Look for feedback. Be alert to signs of confusion in your listener. Realize that nods and smiles don’t necessarily mean understanding. If the other person’s body language seems at odds with the message, take time to clarify the meaning.

Speak slowly and rephrase your sentence when necessary. If someone doesn’t seem to understand you, choose simpler words; don’t just repeat the sentence in a louder voice.
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- **Clarify your true intent with repetition and examples.** Try to be aware of unintentional meanings that may be read into your message.
- **Don’t talk down to the other person.** Try not to overenunciate, and don’t “blame” the listener for not understanding. Say, “Am I going too fast?” rather than “Is this too difficult for you?”
- **Use objective, accurate language.** Avoid throwing around adjectives such as fantastic and fabulous, which people from other cultures might consider unreal and overly dramatic.
- **Learn foreign phrases.** Learn common greetings and a few simple phrases in the other person’s native language. Key phrases are usually listed in travel books and in a separate section of most travel dictionaries.
- **Listen carefully and patiently.** Let other people finish what they have to say. If you interrupt, you may miss something important. You’ll also show a lack of respect. If you do not understand a comment, ask the person to repeat it.
- **Adapt your conversation style to the other person’s.** For instance, if the other person appears to be direct and straightforward, follow suit.
- **Check frequently for comprehension.** Make one point at a time and pause to check on comprehension before moving on.
- **Clarify what will happen next.** At the end of a conversation, be sure that you and the other person agree on what has been said and decided. If appropriate, follow up by writing a letter or a memo summarizing the conversation and thanking the person for meeting with you.
- **Observe body language.** Be alert to roving eyes, glazed looks, and other facial expressions that signal the listener is lost or confused.

In short, take advantage of the other person’s presence to make sure that your message is getting across and that you understand his or her message too.

**Improving Your Workplace Sensitivity**

Today’s workforce is composed of people who differ in race, gender, age, culture, family structure, religion, and educational background. Such **cultural diversity** affects how business messages are conceived, planned, sent, received, and interpreted in the workplace. To communicate more effectively with diverse audiences both inside and outside your company, learn all you can about the cultures of these people. In your research, try to learn useful general information while remaining aware of and open to local variations and individual differences. In any cross-cultural situation, you can communicate more effectively if you heed the following tips:

- **Assume differences until similarity is proved.** Don’t assume that others are more similar to you than they actually are.

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**Document Makeover**

**Improve This Memo**

To practice correcting drafts of actual documents, visit your online course or the access-code-protected portion of the Companion Website. Click “Document Makeovers,” then click Chapter 1. You will find a memo that contains problems and errors relating to what you’ve learned in this chapter about improving business communication. Use the Final Draft decision tool to create an improved version of this memo. Check the message for ethical communication, an audience-centered approach, and intercultural sensitivity.
Important tips to communicate effectively in a culturally diverse workforce include withholding judgment, looking beyond superficial differences, and being flexible.

- **Take responsibility for communication.** Don’t assume it’s the other person’s job to communicate with you.
- **Withhold judgment.** Learn to listen to the whole story and accept differences in others without judging them.
- **Show respect.** Learn how respect is communicated in various cultures (through gestures, eye contact, and so on).
- **Empathize.** Before sending a message, put yourself in the receiver’s shoes. Imagine the receiver’s feelings and point of view.
- **Tolerate ambiguity.** Learn to control your frustration when placed in an unfamiliar or confusing situation.
- **Look beyond the superficial.** Don’t be distracted by things such as dress, appearance, or environmental discomforts.
- **Be patient and persistent.** If you want to communicate with someone from another culture, don’t give up easily.
- **Recognize your own cultural biases.** Learn to identify when your assumptions are different from the other person’s.
- **Be flexible.** Be prepared to change your habits and attitudes when communicating with someone from another culture.
- **Emphasize common ground.** Look for similarities from which to work.
- **Send clear messages.** Make both your verbal and nonverbal signals clear and consistent.
- **Deal with the individual.** Communicate with each person as an individual, not as a stereotypical representative of another group.
- **Learn when to be direct.** Investigate each culture so that you’ll know when to send your message in a straightforward manner and when to be indirect.
- **Observe and learn.** Even after you begin to find your way in another culture, continue to assess the feedback provided by recipients of your communication. The more you learn, the more effective you’ll be.

### Using Communication Technology Effectively

Today’s businesses rely heavily on technology to improve the communication process, and you’ll be expected to use a variety of these tools on the job. The four-page photo essay “Powerful Tools for Communicating Efficiently” (pp. 16–19) offers an overview of the technologies that connect people in offices, factories, and other business settings. In addition, some aspects of communication technology are undergoing exciting changes almost daily:

- **Voice technologies.** The human voice will always be central to business communication, but today it’s being supplemented by a variety of new technologies. *Voice synthesis* regenerates a human speaking voice from computer files that represent words or parts of words. *Voice recognition* converts human speech to computer-compatible data. One of the most exciting new developments is **podcasting** (see chapter 6), the process of recording of audio or video messages that can be distributed via the Internet.

- **Virtual agents.** *Virtual agents*, also known as *bots* (derived from *robot*), are a class of automated tools that perform a variety of communication tasks, such as answering customer service questions and responding to requests for electronic documents.

- **Mobile communication.** If you’re accustomed to studying on the go, you’ll fit right into today’s untethered work environment. In some cases, mobile workers don’t even have traditional offices, using temporary cubicles at work, home offices, cars, airports, and even new Internet-equipped airplanes for office space. Geographic data from the **Global Positioning System (GPS)** are also creating new forms of mobile communication, such as location-based advertising (getting an ad on your cell phone from a store you’re walking past, for instance) and remote monitoring of medical patients and trucking fleets.

- **Networking advances.** You might already be using some of the new networking technologies that help businesspeople communicate and collaborate. **Peer-to-peer (P2P) computing** lets multiple PCs communicate directly so that they can share files or work...
on large problems simultaneously. **Wireless networking**, particularly the commonly used **Wi-Fi** technology, extends the reach of the Internet with wireless access points that connect to PCs and handheld devices via radio signals. **Short messaging service** (SMS) is a text communication feature that has been common on mobile phones in other parts of the world for years and is becoming more popular in North America.

Even as technologies continue to advance, anyone who has used a computer knows that the benefits of technology are not automatic. To communicate effectively, you need to keep technology in perspective, use technological tools productively, and disengage from the computer frequently to communicate in person.

**Keeping Technology in Perspective**

Technology is an aid to interpersonal communication, not a replacement for it. Technology can’t think for you, communicate for you, or make up for a lack of essential skills. The spellchecker in your word processor is a great example. It’s happy to run all your words through the dictionary, but it doesn’t know whether you’re using the correct words or the best words possible.

The sheer number of possibilities in many technological tools can also get in the way of successful communication. For example, both senders and receivers may be distracted if they’re having trouble configuring their computers to participate in an online meeting. Or the content of a message may be obscured if an electronic presentation is overloaded with amateurish visual effects. By focusing on your message and your audience, you can avoid falling into the trap of letting technology get in the way of successful communication.

**Using Technological Tools Productively**

You don’t have to become an expert to use most communication technologies effectively, but you will need to be familiar with the basic features and functions of the tools your employer expects you to use. For instance, if you don’t know the basic functions of your word processor, you could spend hours trying to format a document that a skilled user could format in minutes. Whatever the tool, if you learn the basics, your work will be less frustrating and far more productive.

**Reconnecting with People Frequently**

In spite of technology’s efficiency and speed, it may not be the best choice for every communication situation. Even in the best circumstances, technology can’t match the rich experience of person-to-person contact. Let’s say you IM an employee asking how she did with her sales presentation to an important client, and her answer comes back simply as “Fine.” What does *fine* mean? Did she win the sale? Lose it? Oversleep and miss the meeting? If you visit her in person, you can pick up on nonverbal clues and probably engage her in a more meaningful conversation.

Moreover, even the best communication technologies can’t show people who you really are. You can create amazing documents and presentations without ever leaving your desk or meeting anyone in person. You might be funny, bright, and helpful, but you’re just a voice on the phone or a name on a screen until people can interact with you in person. Remember to step out from behind the technology frequently to learn more about the people you work with—and to let them learn more about you.

**Reviewing Key Points**

This chapter highlights the importance of making business communication effective by ensuring that it stimulates action and encourages audiences to think in new ways. The chapter explains how effective communication helps you adapt to today’s changing workplace. Amid today’s advancing technology, selecting the proper communication tool enables you not only to reach your audiences but also to help them better understand
Powerful Tools for Communicating Efficiently

The tools of business communication evolve with every new generation of digital technology. Selecting the right tool for each situation can enhance your business communication in many ways. In today’s flexible office settings, communication technology helps people keep in touch and stay productive. When co-workers in different cities need to collaborate, they can meet and share ideas without costly travel. Manufacturers use communication technology to keep track of parts, orders, and shipments—and to keep customers well-informed. Those same customers can also communicate with companies in many ways at any time of day or night.

Flexible Workstations

Many professionals have abandoned desktop PCs for laptops they can carry home, on travel, and to meetings. Back at their desks, a docking station transforms the laptop into a full-featured PC with network connection. Workers without permanent desks sometimes share PCs that automatically reconfigure themselves to access each user’s e-mail and files.

Intranets

Businesses use Internet technologies to create an intranet, a private computer network that simplifies information sharing within the company. Intranets can handle a variety of communication needs and become “virtual office spaces” for geographically dispersed teams. To ensure the security of company communication and information, intranets are shielded from the public Internet.

Wireless Networks

Laptop PCs with wireless and handheld capability let workers stay connected to the network from practically anywhere within the office—any desk, any conference room. This technology offers high-speed Internet access within range of a wireless access point. New smart phones will continue this trend of connectivity on the go.

Follow-Me Phone Service

Rather than juggling multiple numbers for home, one or more office locations, and mobile phones, workers can use follow-me phone service. Callers dial one number to reach the person anywhere—at the office, a remote site, a home office, or anywhere with cell phone service. The system automatically forwards calls to a list of programmed numbers and transfers unanswered calls to voice mail.

Electronic Presentations

Combining a color projector with a laptop or personal digital assistant (PDA) running the right software lets people give informative business presentations that are enhanced with sound, video animation, and live web links. Having everything in electronic form also makes it easy to customize a presentation or to make last-minute changes.

Communicating in the Office

Redefining the Office

Technology makes it easier for people to retrieve information and stay connected with colleagues, suppliers, and customers—wherever they are. To simplify life for employees and reduce office expenses, many companies now enable their staffs to work from home or from special satellite offices that are closer to residential areas than their main office complexes. For example, Sun Microsystems lets staff members choose to work either at the main office or at remote offices called “drop-in centers.” Many Sun facilities have specially equipped “iWork” areas that can quickly reconfigure phone and computer connections to meet individual requirements.
Wall Displays
Teams commonly solve problems by brainstorming at a whiteboard. Wall displays take this concept one step further, letting participants transmit words and diagrams to distant colleagues via the corporate intranet. Users can even share the virtual pen to make changes and additions from more than one location.

Web-Based Meetings
Workers can actively participate in web-based meetings by logging on from a desktop PC, laptop, or cell phone. Websites such as WebEx help users integrate voice, text, and video, and let them share applications such as Microsoft PowerPoint and Microsoft Word in a single browser window.

Internet Videophone
Person-to-person video calling has long been possible through popular instant messaging programs. Internet videophone services do even more, letting multiple users participate in a videoconference without the expense and complexity of a full-fledged videoconferencing system. Some services are flexible enough to include telecommuters who have broadband Internet connections.

Collaborating
Working in teams is essential in almost every business. Teamwork can become complicated, however, when team members work in different parts of the company, in different time zones, or even for different companies. Technology helps bridge the distance by making it possible to brainstorm, attend virtual meetings, and share files from widely separated locations. Communication technology also helps companies save money on costly business travel without losing most of the benefits of face-to-face collaboration.

Shared Workspace
Online workspaces such as eRoom and Groove make it easy for far-flung team members to access shared files anywhere, any time. Accessible through a browser, the workspace contains a collection of folders and has built-in intelligence to control which team members can read, edit, and save specific files.

Communicating Remotely

Videoconferencing and Telepresence
Less costly than travel, videoconferencing provides many of the same benefits as an in-person meeting. Advanced systems include telepresence and robot surrogates, which use computers to “place” participants in the room virtually, letting them see and hear everyone while being seen and heard themselves. Such realistic interaction makes meetings more productive.
Warehouse RFID

In an effort to reduce the costs and delays associated with manual inventory reports, Wal-Mart requires its top suppliers to put radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags on all their shipping cases and pallets. These tags automatically provide information that was previously collected by hand via barcode scanners.

Extranet

Extranets are secure, private computer networks that use Internet technology to share business information with suppliers, vendors, partners, and customers. Think of an extranet as an extension of the company intranet that is available to people outside the organization by invitation only.

Wireless Warehouse

Communication technology is a key source of competitive advantage for shipping companies such as FedEx and UPS. Hand-worn scanners use wireless links to help warehouse personnel access instant information that lets them process more packages in less time at transit hubs. Currently, 300 package loaders at four UPS hub facilities are testing the new wireless application called UPScan. A pager-size cordless scanner worn on the loader’s hand captures data from a package bar code and transmits the data via Bluetooth® wireless technology to a Symbol Technologies wireless terminal worn on the loader’s waist.

Package Tracking

Senders and receivers often want frequent updates when packages are in transit. Handheld devices such as the FedEx PowerPad enhance customer service by letting delivery personnel instantly upload package data to the FedEx network. The wireless PowerPad also aids drivers by automatically receiving weather advisories.

Supply Chain Management

Advanced software applications let suppliers, manufacturers, and retailers share information—even when they have incompatible computer systems. Improved information flow increases report accuracy and helps each company in the supply chain manage stock levels.

Sharing the Latest Information

Companies use a variety of communication technologies to create products and services and deliver them to customers. The ability to easily access and share the latest information improves the flow and timing of supplies, lowers operating costs, and boosts financial performance. Easy information access also helps companies respond to customer needs by providing them timely, accurate information and service and by delivering the right products to them at the right time.

Communicating About Products and Services
Over-the-Shoulder Support
For online shoppers who need instant help, many retail websites make it easy to connect with a live sales rep via phone or instant messaging. The rep can provide quick answers to questions and, with permission, can even control a shopper’s browser to help locate particular items.

Corporate Blogs
Web-based journals let companies offer advice, answer questions, and promote the benefits of their products and services in a fast, personal style. Elements of a successful blog include frequent updates and the participation of knowledgeable contributors. Adding a subtle mix of useful commentary and marketing messages helps get customers to visit blogs frequently or sign up for automatic updates through really simple syndication (RSS).

Help Lines
Some people prefer the personal touch of contact by phone. Moreover, some companies assign preferred customers special ID numbers that let them jump to the front of the calling queue. Many companies are addressing the needs of foreign-language speakers by connecting them with external service providers who offer multilingual support.

Interacting
Maintaining an open dialog with customers is a great way to gain a better understanding of their likes and dislikes. Today’s communication technologies make it easier for customers to interact with a company whenever, wherever, and however they wish. A well-coordinated approach to phone, web, and in-store communication helps a company build stronger relationships with its existing customers, which increases the chances of doing more business with each one.

Podcasting
With the portability and convenience of downloadable audio and video recordings, podcasts have quickly become a popular means of delivering everything from college lectures to marketing messages. Podcasts are also used for internal communication as well, replacing conference calls, newsletters, and other traditional communication vehicles.

In-Store Kiosks
Staples is among the retailers that let shoppers buy from the web while they’re still in the store. Web-connected kiosks were originally used to let shoppers custom-configure their PCs, but the kiosks also give customers access to roughly 8,000 in-store items as well as to the 50,000 products available online.

Communicating with Customers
your messages. In today’s age of information, getting your audience’s attention prevents people from overlooking vital information that you pass along. With today’s global marketplace and diverse workforce, understanding other backgrounds, personalities, and perceptions enables you to communicate clearly with people from other cultures. And since today’s companies are committed to working in teams, knowing how to listen to colleagues and to recognize the meaning behind their nonverbal signals helps you collaborate with the others in your work groups.

This chapter also describes the six steps in the communication process. And it cautions you not to pack too much information into each message you send. It explains five ways to improve your business communication: by committing to ethical communication, adopting an audience-centered approach, improving your intercultural sensitivity, improving your workplace sensitivity, and using technology effectively.

The next chapter discusses communicating in teams. It explains how to listen to others by overcoming the common barriers to good listening. It also talks about how to understand nonverbal communication. Finally, it helps you put this new information to work when planning and participating in meetings and when using telephones and voice mail.

Test Your Knowledge

1. What benefits does effective communication give you and your organization?

2. What effects do globalization and workforce diversity have on communication?

3. Define ethics, and explain what ethical communication encompasses.

4. Why should communicators take an audience-centered approach to communication?

5. Why is it important to reconnect in person when using technology to communicate?
1. Why do you think communication is vital to the success of every business organization? Explain briefly.

2. How does your understanding of the communication process help you conduct business more effectively?

3. Your company has relocated to a U.S. city where a Vietnamese subculture is strongly established. Many employees will be from this subculture. As a member of the human resources department, what suggestions can you make to improve communication between management and the Vietnamese Americans your company is hiring?

4. When Mena Trott shared with her customers the lessons her company learned after a computer systems failure (refer to the discussion of Figure 1.3 on p. 8), how was she engaging in audience-centered communication?

5. Ethical Choices  Because of your excellent communication skills, your boss always asks you to write his reports for him. But when the CEO compliments him on his logical organization and clear writing style, your boss responds as if he’d written all those reports himself. What kind of ethical choice does this represent? What can you do in this situation? Briefly explain your solution and your reasoning.

Practice Your Knowledge

Activities

For active links to all websites discussed in this chapter, visit this text’s website at www.prenhall.com/bovee. Locate your book and click on its Companion Website link. Then select Chapter 1, and click on “Featured Websites.” Locate the name of the page or the URL related to the material in the text. Please note that links to sites that become inactive after publication of the book will be removed from the Featured Websites section.

1. Analyze This Document  Your boss wants to send a brief e-mail message welcoming employees recently transferred to your department from your Hong Kong branch.
They all speak English, but your boss asks you to review her message for clarity. What would you suggest your boss change in the following e-mail message—and why? Would you consider this message to be audience centered? Why or why not?

I wanted to welcome you ASAP to our little family here in the states. It’s high time we shook hands in person and not just across the sea. I’m pleased as punch about getting to know you all, and I for one will do my level best to sell you on America.

2. Ethical Choices  In less than a page, explain why you think each of the following is or is not ethical:
   a. De-emphasizing negative test results in a report on your product idea
   b. Taking a computer home to finish a work-related assignment
   c. Telling an associate and close friend that she’d better pay more attention to her work responsibilities or management will fire her
   d. Recommending the purchase of excess equipment to use up your allocated funds before the end of the fiscal year so that your budget won’t be cut next year

3. The Changing Workplace: Personal Expression at Work  Blogging has become a popular way for employees to communicate with customers and other parties outside the company. In some cases, employee blogs have been quite beneficial for both companies and their customers, by providing helpful information and “putting a human face” on other formal and imposing corporations. However, in some other cases, employees have been fired for posting information that their employers said was inappropriate. One particular area of concern is criticism of the company or individual managers. Should employees be allowed to criticize their employers in a public forum such as a blog? In a brief e-mail message, argue for or against company policies that prohibit any critical information in employee blogs.

4. Internet  Cisco is a leading manufacturer of equipment for the Internet and corporate networks and has developed a code of ethics that it expects employees to abide by. Visit the company’s website at www.cisco.com and find the Code of Conduct. In a brief paragraph, describe three specific examples of things you could do that would violate these provisions; then list at least three opportunities that Cisco provides its employees to report ethics violations or ask questions regarding ethical dilemmas.

5. Communication Etiquette  Potential customers often visit your production facility before making purchase decisions. You and the people who report to you in the sales department have received extensive training in etiquette issues because you deal with high-profile clients so frequently. However, the rest of the workforce has not received such training, and you worry that someone might inadvertently say or do something that would offend one of these potential customers. In a two-paragraph e-mail, explain to the general manager why you think anyone who might come in contact with customers should receive basic etiquette training.

6. Self-Introduction  Write a paragraph or prepare a two-minute oral presentation introducing yourself to your instructor and your class. Include such things as your background, interests, achievements, and goals.

7. Teamwork  Your boss has asked your workgroup to research and report on corporate child-care facilities. Of course, you’ll want to know who (besides your boss) will be reading your report. Working with two team members, list four or five other things you’ll want to know about the situation and about your audience before starting your research. Briefly explain why each of the items on your list is important.

8. Communication Process: Analyzing Miscommunication  Use the six phases of the communication process to analyze a miscommunication you’ve recently had with a co-worker, supervisor, classmate, teacher, friend, or family member. What idea were
1: Understanding Business Communication in Today’s Workplace

you trying to share? How did you encode and transmit it? Did the receiver get the message? Did the receiver correctly decode the message? How do you know? Based on your analysis, what do you think prevented your successful communication in this instance?

9. Ethical Choices Knowing that you have numerous friends throughout the company, your boss relies on you for feedback concerning employee morale and other issues affecting the staff. She recently approached you and asked you to start reporting any behavior that might violate company policies, from taking office supplies home to making personal long-distance calls. List the issues you’d like to discuss with her before you respond to her request.

10. Intercultural Sensitivity: Recognizing Differences Your boss represents a Canadian toy company that’s negotiating to buy miniature truck wheels from a manufacturer in Osaka, Japan. In the first meeting, he explains that your company expects to control the design of the wheels as well as the materials that are used to make them. The manufacturer’s representative looks down and says softly, “Perhaps that will be difficult.” Your boss presses for agreement, and to emphasize your company’s willingness to buy, he shows the prepared contract he’s brought with him. However, the manufacturer seems increasingly vague and uninterested.

Your task: What cultural differences may be interfering with effective communication in this situation? Explain briefly in an e-mail message to your instructor.

11. Teamwork Working with two other students, prepare a list of ten examples of slang (in your own language) that would probably be misinterpreted or misunderstood during a business conversation with someone from another culture. Next to each example, suggest other words you might use to convey the same message. Do the alternatives mean exactly the same as the original slang or idiom?

12. Intercultural Communication: Studying Cultures Choose a specific country, such as India, Portugal, Bolivia, Thailand, or Nigeria, with which you are not familiar. Research the culture and write a brief summary of what a U.S. businessperson would need to know about concepts of personal space and rules of social behavior in order to conduct business successfully in that country.

13. Multicultural Workforce: Bridging Differences Differences in gender, age, and physical abilities contribute to the diversity of today’s workforce. Working with a classmate, role-play a conversation in which

a. A woman is being interviewed for a job by a male personnel manager
b. An older person is being interviewed for a job by a younger personnel manager
c. A person using a wheelchair is being interviewed for a job by a person who can walk

How did differences between the applicant and the interviewer shape the communication? What can you do to improve communication in such situations?

14. Intercultural Sensitivity: Understanding Attitudes You are assistant to the director of marketing for a telecommunications firm based in Germany. You’re accompanying your boss to negotiate with an official in Guangzhou, China, who’s in charge of selecting a new telephone system for the city. Your boss insists that the specifications be spelled out in detail in the contract. However, the Chinese negotiator argues that in developing a long-term business relationship, such minor details are unimportant.

Your task: What can you suggest that your boss do or say to break this intercultural deadlock and obtain the contract so that both parties are comfortable? Outline your ideas in a brief e-mail message to your instructor.
Expand Your Knowledge

Exploring the Best of the Web

Check Out These Free Resources  The Business Writer’s Free Library, www.mapnp.org/library/commskls/cmm_writ.htm, is a terrific resource for business communication material. Categories of information include basic composition skills, basic writing skills, correspondence, reference material, and general resources and advice. Log on and read about the most common errors in English, become a word detective, ask Miss Grammar, review samples of common forms of correspondence, fine-tune your interpersonal skills, join a newsgroup, and more. Follow the links and improve your effectiveness as a business communicator.

Exploring the Web on Your Own

Review these chapter-related websites on your own to learn more about achieving communication success in the workplace.

1. Netiquette Home Page, www.albion.com/netiquette/index.html. Learn the do’s and don’ts of online communication at this site, then take the Netiquette Quiz.

2. Learn how to improve your cultural savvy and gain an international competitive advantage. Visit Cultural Savvy, www.culturalsavvy.com, and read the country reports and cultural tips. Follow the site’s links to interviews, profiles, articles, books, and more.

3. 101 Best Web Sites for Writers, at www.writersdigest.com, points the way to great search engines and general reference sites. While aimed primarily at professional writers, the list has something to offer all business communicators. The site list is updated every year, so be sure to select the current year’s list.

Exercises

1. What are some strategies for communicating with an uncooperative audience?
2. What is the value of diversity in the workplace?
3. Why is bad etiquette bad for business?

Learn Interactively

Interactive Study Guide

Visit www.prenhall.com/bovee, then locate your book and click on its Companion Website link. Select Chapter 1 to take advantage of the interactive “Chapter Quiz” to test your knowledge of chapter concepts. Receive instant feedback on whether you need additional studying. Also, visit the “Study Hall,” where you’ll find an abundance of valuable resources that will help you succeed in this course.

Peak Performance Grammar and Mechanics

If your instructor has required the use of “Peak Performance Grammar and Mechanics” module. Click on “Grammar Basics,” and then click “Nouns and Pronouns.” Take the Pretest to determine whether you have any weak areas. Then review those areas in the Refresher Course. Take the Follow-Up Test to check your grasp of nouns and pronouns. For an extra challenge or advanced practice, take the Advanced Test. Finally, for additional reinforcement in nouns, go to the “Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage” section that follows, and complete the “Level I: Self-Assessment” exercises.

Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage

Level 1: Self-Assessment—Nouns

Use the following self-assessment exercises to improve your knowledge of and power over English grammar, mechanics, and usage. Review all of Section 1.1 in the Handbook of
Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage that appears at the end of this book. Answers to these exercises appear on p. AK-1.

In items 1–5, underline the common nouns and circle the proper nouns.

1. Give the balance sheet to Melissa.
2. We'd like to order 50 more satchels for Craigmont Stores, and 3 each for the other stores on our list.
3. Tarnower Corporation donates a portion of its profits to charity every year.
4. Which aluminum bolts are packaged?
5. Please send the Joneses a dozen of the following: stopwatches, canteens, headbands, and wristbands.

In items 6–10, underline the subjects and circle the objects.

6. The technician has already repaired the machine for the client.
7. An attorney will talk to the group about incorporation.
8. After her vacation, the buyer prepared a third-quarter budget.
9. The new flat monitors are serving our department very well.
10. Accuracy overrides speed in importance.

In items 11–15, underline inappropriate noun plurals and possessives, and write the correct form in the space provided.

11. _____ Make sure that all copies include the new addresses.
12. _____ Ask Jennings to collect all employee's donations for the Red Cross drive.
13. _____ Charlie now has two son-in-laws to help him with his two online business's.
14. _____ Avoid using too many parentheses when writing your reports.
15. _____ Follow President Nesses rules about what constitutes a week's work.

Level 2: Workplace Applications

The following items contain numerous errors in grammar, capitalization, punctuation, abbreviation, number style, word division, and vocabulary. Rewrite each sentence in the space provided, correcting all errors. Write C in the space after any sentence that is already correct.

1. If a broken down unproductive guy like Carl can get a raise; why can't a take charge guy like me get one?

2. Visit our website and sign up for “On Your Toes”, our free newsletter that keeps you informed of promotions, discounts and about Internet-only specials.
3. As of March, 2007, the Board of Directors have 9 members including: three women, one African-American, and one American of Hispanic descent.

4. As one of the nearly 3,000,000 New York Life policyholders eligible to vote, we urge you to approve the new investment advisory agreement.

5. Gerrald Higgins, vice president for marketing, told us reporters that Capital One provides financial services to one-fourth of homes in the United States.

6. Our Customer Relations associates work with people everyday to answer questions, provide assistance, and helping solve problems.

7. If anyone breaches the lease, its likely that the landlord will file legal action against them to collect on the remainder of they’re lease.

8. A IRA is one of the most common plans for the self-employed because of it’s ease of setting up and administering.

9. My advise to you is, to put you’re mission statement on your web cite.

10. According to Karen Smiths’ report small-business owners do’nt recognize the full effect that layoffs and terminations are liable to have on the motivation of surviving employees’.
11. To exacerbate the processing of your US tax return, use the mailing label and bar coded envelope that comes with your tax package.

12. The NASE have implemented an exciting array of programs that make it more easy for legislative opinions and concerns to be voiced by you.

13. Keep in mind the old saying “When we laugh the world laugh with us, when you cry you cry alone.”

14. Albert Edmunds and me are Owners of the real estate firm of Edmunds & Cale, which have recently opened a new office in San Diego co.

15. The memo inferred that the economic downturn will have a greater affect on the company's bottom line then we previously assumed, this was the worse news we could of gotten.

Level 3: Document Critique

The following document contains errors in grammar, capitalization, punctuation, abbreviation, number style, word division, and vocabulary. Correct all errors using standard proofreading marks (see Appendix C).

Memo

TO: All Employees
FROM: R. Smith, Personnel Director
DATE: December 28, 2007
SUBJECT: Time Cards

After reviewing our current method of keeping track of employee hours, we have concluded that time cards leave a lot to be desired. So starting Monday, we have a new system, a time clock. You just have to punch in and punch out; whenever you will come and go from your work area's.

The new system may take a little while to get used to, but should be helpful to those of us who are making a new year's resolution to be more punctual.

Happy New Year to all!

eg