Chapter 1
Business Communication in the Digital Age

Business Communication: Process and Product, 8e

Mary Ellen Guffey & Dana Loewy
## Communication Skills: Your Ticket to Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional abilities</th>
<th>New requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Media savvy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Good judgment online:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonverbal</td>
<td>• Maintaining positive image and presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>• Protecting employer’s reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
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</table>

- Maintaining positive image and presence
- Protecting employer’s reputation
Writing in the Digital Age

• Writing matters more than ever; online media require more of it, not less.
• Communicating clearly and effectively has never been more important than it is today.
• Life-changing critical judgments about people are being made solely on their writing ability.
Tools for Success in the 21st Century Workplace

- Knowledge and information workers engage in mind work.
- Workers of the future must make sense of words, figures, and data.
- Knowledge available in the digital universe doubles every year.
- Talent shortages plague even a bleak U.S. labor market.
Thinking Critically in the Digital Age

Thinking creatively and critically means:

- Having opinions backed up by reasons and evidence
- Anticipating and solving problems
- Making decisions and communicating them effectively
Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem Solving Process

1. Explore the Challenge
   - Identify the challenge.
   - Gather information and clarify the problem.

2. Generate Ideas
   - Come up with many ideas to solve the problem.
   - Pick the most promising ideas.

3. Implement Solutions
   - Select and strengthen solutions.
   - Plan how to bring your solution to life and implement.
Social Media and Changing Communication Technologies

Savvy organizations are “plugged in” and use both old and new media

• To connect with consumers
• To invite feedback
• To improve products and services
• To announce promotions and events
• To draw traffic to blogs, tweets, the company website, and online communities
• To respond to crises

Word of mouth, positive and negative, can travel instantly at the speed of a few mouse clicks.
Anytime, Anywhere: 24/7/365 Availability

The challenges of relentless connectedness across time zones and distances:

• Working long hours without extra compensation
• Being available practically anywhere and anytime
• Living with an increasingly blurry line between work and leisure
• Remaining tethered to the workplace with electronic devices around the clock
Anytime, Anywhere: 24/7/365 Availability

The challenges of relentless connectedness across time zones and distances:

- The physical office extending its reach by becoming mobile and always “on.”
- Americans work 50 percent more than their colleagues in other industrialized nations while enjoying the shortest paid vacations.
- A networked, information-driven workforce never goes “off-duty” in an organization that “never sleeps.”
The Global Marketplace and Competition

Factors that prompted companies to move to emerging markets around the world:

- Rise of new communication technologies
- Removal of trade barriers
- Advanced forms of transportation
- Saturated local markets
The Global Marketplace and Competition

Requirements for successful communicators in new markets:

• Understanding different customs, lifestyles, and business practices
• Coping with challenges of multiple time zones, vast distances, and different languages
• Developing new skills and attitudes
• Practicing cultural awareness, flexibility, and patience
Shrinking Management Layers: Advantages

- Cost savings and efficiency
- Fewer layers between managers and line workers
- Shorter lines of communication
- Faster decision making
- Quick response to market changes
Growing Population Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2050</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Non-Hispanics</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td></td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian and Pacific Islanders</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

Percent

2010 2020 2050
Growing Workforce Diversity

Benefits consumers, work teams, and businesses

- A diverse staff is better able to respond to increasingly diverse customer base locally and globally.
- Team members with various experience are more likely to create products that consumers demand.
- Consumers want to deal with companies respecting their values.
Virtual and Nonterritorial Offices

• Mobile and decentralized workspaces
• Flexible work arrangements
• “Work shifters,” a new breed of telecommuter
• “Coworking,” sharing communal office space as needed
• Anytime, anywhere office enabled by technology
The Networked Office in a Hyperconnected World

- Smart electronic devices => Mobility
- Social media networks, Web 2.0 => Interactivity
- Biggest Shift: one-sided, slow forms of communication (hard-copy, memos, and letters) => interactive, instant, paperless communication (e-mail, instant messaging, texting, social media)
Media Richness

The more helpful cues and immediate feedback the medium provides, the richer and less ambiguous it is:

**RICH:** Face-to-face and telephone conversation => complex issues, sensitive subjects

**LEAN:** Written media (e-mail, letter, memo, note, report) => routine, unambiguous problems
Social Presence

**Definition:** How much awareness of the sender is conveyed with the message. Media with high social presence convey warmth and are personal.

HIGH in synchronous communication: face to face, video conference, live chat

LOW in asynchronous communication: e-mail, social media post
Informal Communication Channels

The grapevine: gossip from the break room to the water cooler to social media

- Carries unofficial messages
- Flows haphazardly
- Can be remarkably accurate
- Is mostly disliked by management
- Thrives where official information is limited
Goals of Ethical Business Communicators

- Abide by the law
- Tell the truth
- Label opinions
- Be objective
- Communicate clearly
- Use inclusive language
- Give credit
Overcoming Obstacles to Ethical Decision Making

Common ethical traps to avoid on the job:

The false necessity trap—convincing yourself that no other choices exist

The doctrine-of-relative-filth trap—comparing unethical behavior with someone else’s even more unethical behavior
Overcoming Obstacles to Ethical Decision Making

Common ethical traps to avoid on the job:

The ends-justify-the-means trap—using unethical methods to accomplish a goal

The self-deception trap—persuading yourself, for example, that a lie is not really a lie

The rationalization trap—justifying unethical actions with excuses
Choosing Tools for Doing the Right Thing

Five questions to guide ethical decisions:

1. Is the action legal?
2. Would you do it if you were on the opposite side?
3. Can you rule out a better alternative?
4. Would a trusted advisor agree?
5. Would family, friends, employer, or coworkers approve?