

CHAPTER 1:

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION IN TODAY'S DIGITAL, SOCIAL, MOBILE WORLD

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 1 focuses on the importance and benefits of becoming an effective business communicator and highlights characteristics of effective communication. A definition of effective communication is followed by a discussion of why communication is important in business, and what it means to communicate effectively in today's global business environment. The eight phases in the communication process are also explored, and the traditional "publishing" or "broadcasting" model of communication is compared with the newer, more interactive social communication model. The mobile revolution and the changes mobile technology is bringing to business communication are then discussed. Three key ways to improve business communication are addressed in detail: committing to ethical communication, communicating in a world of diversity, and using communication technology effectively. Examples of unethical communication practices and a discussion of how to recognize ethical choices precede a list of questions to help a communicator make an ethical decision. Readers will learn about ways to recognize cultural differences in areas such as cultural contexts, ethics, social customs, and nonverbal communication. The suggestions for polishing both written and oral intercultural skills can help a businessperson communicate more effectively with people of differing cultural backgrounds, as can the list of tips for working in a culturally diverse workforce. Readers are offered an overview of powerful new technologies for communicating effectively in a variety of business settings. The information presented in Chapter 1 provides a base for all the remaining chapters in the text as readers are reminded that communication skills are their greatest asset in professional life.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Why Communication Is the Most Important Business Skill

- Communication Is Important to Your Career
- Communication Is Important to Your Company
- What Makes Business Communication Effective?

Communicating as a Professional

- Understanding What Employers Expect from You
- Communicating in an Organizational Context
- Adopting an Audience-Centred Approach

Exploring the Communication Process

- The Basic Communication Model
- The Social Communication Model

The Mobile Revolution

- The Rise of Mobile as a Business Communication Platform
- How Mobile Technologies Are Changing Business Communication

Committing to Ethical Communication

- Distinguishing Ethical Dilemmas from Ethical Lapses
- Making Ethical Choices

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Communicating in a World of Diversity

- The Advantages and Challenges of a Diverse Workforce
- Key Aspects of Cultural Diversity
 - Cultural Context
 - Legal and Ethical Differences
 - Social Customs
 - Nonverbal Communication
 - Age Differences
 - Gender
 - Religious Differences
 - Ability Differences
- Advice for Improving Intercultural Communication
 - Writing for Multilingual Audiences
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Using Technology to Improve Communication

- Keeping Technology in Perspective
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- Reconnecting with People Frequently

Developing Skills for Your Career

Chapter Review and Activities

TEACHING NOTES

Why Communication Is the Most Important Business Skill

Communication is the process of transferring information and meaning between *senders* and *receivers* using one or more written, oral, visual, or electronic channels.

- Effective communication skills are critical for your own career and for any organization you join. These skills are valuable and transferrable.
- You must be able to express your ideas clearly and persuasively.
- The Conference Board of Canada has ranked communication skills highest on a list of employability skills.
- Being able to write clearly, speak clearly and confidently, answer and make a telephone call appropriately, and listen effectively will give you a major advantage throughout your career.

Effective communication yields a number of important benefits for both you and your company:

- Stronger trust between colleagues and organizations
- Closer ties with important communities in the marketplace
- Opportunities to influence conversations, perceptions, and trends
- Greater productivity and faster problem solving
- Improved financial outcomes
- Earlier warning of potential problems

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- Stronger decision making
- Clearer, more persuasive marketing communication
- Higher employee engagement and lower turnover

Effective communication connects a company to its stakeholders. To develop effective messages, be sure to follow these steps:

- Provide practical information
- Give facts rather than vague impressions
- Present information in a concise, efficient manner
- Clarify expectations and responsibilities
- Offer compelling, persuasive arguments and recommendations

Communicating as a Professional

This section puts communication in a professional context and defines professionalism.

Professionalism can be recognized in six distinct traits:

- Striving to excel
- Being dependable and accountable
- Being a team player
- Demonstrating a sense of etiquette
- Making ethical decisions
- Maintaining a positive outlook.

No matter what career field you select, your employer will expect you to be competent at a wide range of communication tasks. Employers expect you to be able to demonstrate the following skills:

- Recognizing information needs, using efficient search techniques to find good-quality information, and using your information ethically, a set of skills called *digital information fluency*
- Organizing ideas and information logically and completely
- Expressing ideas and information coherently and persuasively
- Actively listening to others
- Communicating effectively with people from diverse backgrounds
- Using communication technologies effectively and efficiently
- Following accepted standards of grammar, spelling, and other aspects of high-quality writing and speaking
- Communicating in a courteous manner that reflects contemporary expectations of business etiquette
- Communicating ethically, even when choices aren't crystal clear
- Managing your time wisely and using resources efficiently
- Using critical thinking to form logical conclusions and make sound recommendations

Communicating effectively in a variety of organizational contexts requires recognizing important differences between personal and professional communication. It is also necessary to recognize and accommodate the unique characteristics of each organization within which you work.

Organizations have *formal* communication networks (ways for information to flow along the lines of command) as well as *informal* communication networks (unofficial ways for information

to flow, also known as the *grapevine* or the *rumour mill*). Both networks are important, but too much informal communication and gossip may signal problems with formal communication.

An audience-centred approach means focusing on and caring about the members of your audience (i.e., making an effort to get the message across in a way meaningful and respectful way to them). This approach may be called the “*you*” *attitude*, in which messages are tailored to the age, status, style, and personal and professional concerns of the audience. The use of the “*you*” attitude reflects *emotional intelligence*, a combination of emotional and social skills successful managers and leaders require.

An important element of audience-centred communication is etiquette, the expected norms of behaviour in a particular situation. Your behaviour can have a profound influence on your company's success and your career because your behaviour reflects on the company's reputation and regard.

Three principles will get you through any situation:

- Respect
- Courtesy
- Common sense.

Always take a few moments to consider what others might expect of you in a communication situation.

Exploring the Communication Process

Communication is a dynamic, two-way process built from eight steps. It is helpful to understand these steps so that you may improve your own skills.

The following eight steps make up the communication process:

1. The sender has an idea.
2. The sender encodes the idea in a message.
3. The sender produces the message in a transmittable medium.
4. The sender transmits the message through a channel.
5. The audience receives the message.
6. The receiver decodes the message.
7. The receiver responds to the message.
8. The receiver provides feedback to the sender.

This process is complex, and efforts to communicate often fail. The better you understand the process, the greater your likely success.

The communication process described above generally represents the traditional nature of much business communication, which was primarily defined by a publishing or broadcasting mindset.

In contrast, a newer and increasingly effective social communication model has emerged, characterized by communication that is interactive, conversational, and usually open to all who want to participate. Instead of transmitting a fixed message, a sender in a social media environment initiates a conversation by sharing valuable information, and then that information is revised and reshaped by the web of participants as they share and comment on it.

Remember that for all the advantages of the social communication model, it may also have disadvantages:

- Information overload
- Reduced engagement with tasks and people
- Fragmented attention
- Social media fatigue
- Information security risks
- Distractions that hurt productivity
- Difficulty maintaining a healthy boundary between personal and professional lives

Business communication reflects a hybrid between traditional and social communication approaches.

The Mobile Revolution

It should be no surprise that media consumption on smartphones has skyrocketed and that mobile has become an essential part of business communication, using many familiar communication tools.

Smartphones have become intensely personal devices, however, and mobile communication can resemble a continuous stream of conversations. Companies that understand and embrace mobile are best positioned to capitalize on the shift to mobile.

Reading on small screens is challenging, and the more difficult the reading experience, the more likely that readers will misinterpret the message or stop reading. Beyond reading, though, mobile is changing the way people communicate. People who have grown up with mobile communication technology expect immediate access to information and constant connection to their various networks.

Mobile is changing business communication in some significant ways.

- Mobile connectivity may blur the boundaries between the personal and the professional.
- The layout of mobile phones may make creating and consuming content challenging.
- Mobile users are often multitasking.
- Mobile communication has put pressure on traditional standards of grammar, punctuation, and writing.
- Mobile devices extend our senses and minds.
- Mobile devices create security and privacy concerns.
- Mobile tools can enhance productivity and collaboration.
- Mobile apps can help with many typical business tasks.
- Mobile connectivity can accelerate decision making and problem solving by getting the right information to the right people at the right time. With mobile, companies may also communicate faster during crises.
- Mobile interactivity can create more engaging experiences for customers and other business users.

Committing to Ethical Communication

Business communicators have a responsibility to communicate ethically with audiences.

- Ethics are the accepted principles of conduct that govern behaviour within a society.
- Ethical communication includes all relevant information, is true in every sense, and is not deceptive in any way. Unethical communication can include falsehoods and misleading information (or exclude important information).

Examples of unethical communication include the following:

- Plagiarizing
- Omitting essential information
- Selectively misquoting
- Misrepresenting numbers
- Distorting visuals
- Failing to respect privacy or information security needs
- Coercing people to give positive online reviews
- Failing to disclose financially beneficial relationships

A key issue is transparency, which refers to an organization's openness, the degree to which participants have access to the information they need to accurately process the messages they receive. A key aspect of transparency involves knowing who is behind a message.

Audiences need to know when they are being marketed to, particularly with regard to *native advertising* (also known as *sponsored content*), which is advertising material designed to look like news or social media; and *stealth advertising*, which involves promotion that does not appear clearly as marketing activity.

Deciding what is ethical can be quite complex. An ethical dilemma involves choosing among alternatives that aren't clear-cut. An ethical lapse, on the other hand, is a clearly unethical (and frequently illegal) choice.

Ethical business communication depends on three elements:

- Ethical individuals
- Ethical leadership
- 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.

Asking yourself the following questions can help you make an ethical decision:

- 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?
- Are you comfortable with your decision? Would you be embarrassed if it were printed in tomorrow's newspaper or spread across the internet?

If you have doubts about a message, ask for guidance from your company's legal department.

Communicating in a World of Diversity

Diversity is often framed in terms of ethnicity, but a broader definition includes “all characteristics and experiences that define each of us as individuals”—such as age, language, religion, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and ability.

A diverse workforce offers a broader spectrum of viewpoints and ideas, helps companies understand and identify with diverse markets, and enables companies to benefit from a wider range of employee talents.

Culture is a shared system of symbols, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, and norms for behaviour. Culture affects the way we perceive the world and respond to others. In turn, others perceive and respond to us through their cultural filters.

A crucial idea is to ensure that members of organizations have secure cultural competency, which refers to one's appreciation of cultural differences that affect communication and to one's ability to adjust communication style accordingly.

There are several aspects of cultural diversity we should understand to ensure successful communication. Always consider the unique circumstances of an encounter when you make communication decisions.

Communication occurs in a cultural context, a mix of traditions, expectations, and social rules that convey meaning. High-context cultures rely less on the explicit content of the message and more on the context of nonverbal actions and environmental setting to convey meaning. The primary role of communication in high-context cultures is to build relationships. Low-context cultures rely more on the explicit content and less on circumstances and cues to convey meaning. The primary role of communication in low-context cultures is to exchange information.

Legal systems and ethical standards differ from culture to culture, and ethical values are based in cultural values. Keep messages ethical in four ways:

- Seek mutual ground
- Send and receive messages without judgment
- Send honest messages
- Respect cultural differences

Similarly, rules governing social customs differ from culture to culture. Some rules are formal and specifically articulated (e.g., table manners) and some are informal and learned over time (e.g., the comfortable distance between two speakers standing in an office).

Nonverbal communication, a vital part of the communication process, varies widely from culture to culture.

- Nonverbal communication includes everything from facial expressions to gestures to style of dress.
- Interpreting nonverbal communication according to your own culture can be dangerous.

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Cultural differences can also influence perspectives on age.

- In some cultures, youth is associated with positive characteristics while age is associated with declining powers and a loss of respect and authority.
- In others, longevity earns respect and increasing power and freedom.

Today multiple generations are present in the workplace, each with different values, expectations, and communication habits. Remember that each generation brings strength to the workplace.

Perspectives on gender also vary across cultures, resulting in vastly different views of men and women in business.

- Gender biases may range from subtle, unconscious beliefs to overt anti-women discrimination.
- Note that while women and men enter professional positions in roughly equal ratios, there are more men, and fewer women, as you look up the organizational hierarchy.
- Men and women communicate differently and for different purposes.
- Outdated ideas of gender and sexual orientation may be a source of confusion, controversy, and discrimination. Companies may have nondiscrimination policies to protect employees' rights, and communication plays a critical role in the effectiveness of policy.

Religious differences can lead to a great deal of controversy because religion is one of the most personal and influential aspects of life. As companies establish more inclusive workplaces, religion is likely to be a focal point of discussion.

Working effectively with others whose hearing, vision, cognitive ability and/or mobility differs from yours requires respect and sensitivity. *Assistive technologies* can help employees with different abilities.

Follow the tips below to communicate more effectively in cross-cultural situations:

- Avoid ethnocentrism (the tendency to judge all other groups according to the standards, behaviours, and customs of one's own group).
- Avoid stereotyping (assigning a wide range of generalized—and often inaccurate—attributes to individuals on the basis of their membership in a particular culture or social group).
- Don't automatically assume that others think, believe, or behave as you do.
- Accept differences in others without judging them.
- Learn how to communicate respect in various cultures.
- Tolerate ambiguity and control your frustration.
- Don't be distracted by superficial factors such as personal appearance.
- Recognize your own cultural biases.
- Be flexible and be prepared to change your habits and attitudes.
- Observe and learn; the more you learn, the more effective you'll be.

To help you prepare effective written communications for multicultural audiences, remember these tips:

- Use plain language
- Avoid ambiguous language (words with multiple meanings)

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- Be clear
- Cite numbers carefully
- Avoid slang and be careful with jargon and abbreviations
- Be brief
- Use short paragraphs
- Use transitions generously.

To help you prepare effective oral messages for those who English is not their native language, remember these tips:

- Speak clearly, simply, and relatively slowly
- Look for feedback but interpret it carefully
- Rephrase if necessary
- Clarify your meaning with repetition and examples
- Don't talk down to the other person
- Learn important phrases in your audience's language
- Listen carefully and respectfully
- Adapt your conversation style to the other person's
- Check frequently for comprehension
- Clarify what will happen next.

Today's businesses rely heavily on technology to improve the communication process, and you'll need to know how to use a variety of these technologies on the job. To communicate effectively you'll need to do the following:

- Keep technology in perspective
- Use technological tools productively
- Guard against information overload and social media fatigue
- Disengage from the computer frequently to communicate in person.

Finally, remember that communication skills are probably the most important skill set in your professional life. Here are some related skills to develop:

- Critical thinking
- Collaboration
- Knowledge application and analysis
- Business ethics and ethical responsibility
- Information technology
- Data literacy

OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES STUDENTS OFTEN FACE WITH TOPICS IN CHAPTER 1

PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW

Getting off to a good start is essential to a successful term. Students will most likely experience some anxiety about the course requirements and content. Taking the time to provide an overview of the various chapters and elements of communication they will study can help overcome this initial uneasiness.

PROVIDE IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK

Although students will typically follow along with an explanation of the model of the communication process presented in the text, take time to discuss the model in class and provide numerous illustrations. Provide examples of feedback that is immediate. (e.g., feedback given in a face-to-face conversation) versus feedback that is delayed (e.g., a letter to a newspaper editor). Provide examples that illustrate where problems can arise within the communication process. Help students understand that these problems can occur with the sender, the message, the channel, or the receiver. This may also be a good time to have students develop a list of some of the barriers to effective communication that either a sender or a receiver may experience. Discussing the importance of selecting the correct channel for communicating a message will also help students better understand the importance of each step of the communication process.

UNPACKING THE MOBILE REVOLUTION

For students who can't remember life before computers, or even life before mobile phones, mobile communication may seem natural, not revolutionary. Help students recognize that the strength of many organizations lies in their traditions and consistency; for such organizations, mobile is truly disruptive. Yet businesses must embrace the shift to mobile if they hope to succeed in coming years.

“TL;DR” (too long; didn't read) is a funny internet meme, but it's also the real experience of reading on a smartphone. What else do your students know about the pros and cons of mobile technology? There's space for rich discussion in this topic, particularly as businesses rethink their relationships with consumers and non-consumers.

PROVIDE EXAMPLES OF UNETHICAL COMMUNICATION

Students should all be able to provide examples of unethical business actions; however, they may not have viewed some of these as ethical issues as they relate to communication. Engage students by discussing communication documents such as product warranties, product assembly instructions, customer service documents, telephone conversations, marketing brochures and advertisements, human resource documents (including applications and annual reviews), information on company websites, and many others. Stress that some of the examples will be written and some will be oral. Invite students to provide other examples of situations in which ethical issues arise when communicating as a business employee.

DISCUSS CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Observe that the classroom itself encompasses a range of backgrounds, experiences, and forms of individual difference, and lead a discussion to help the entire class identify the responsibilities a businessperson has to communicate effectively with diverse co-workers. Content in this section may elicit strong responses because people invest ideas such as gender and religion with deep values. Encourage genuine curiosity, but not judgment, hostility, or mockery, and remind students not to fall back on stereotypes, which may be false and harmful. Conversations around gender and nondiscrimination policies offer a good place to tie back to ethics. What is ethical as we examine issues like these? Students may not recognize their own biases (research shows our biases are deep-rooted and rarely obvious to ourselves), so these conversations may be uncomfortable, but they are important. Remember that international students may have very different views on some of these issues than Canadian-born students hold, and be sure the classroom feels safe for all students.

EXPLAIN HIGH-CONTEXT AND LOW-CONTEXT CULTURES

The idea of high-context and low-context cultures will undoubtedly be new to students. Give various examples of how the context can affect business negotiations, ethical decisions, and the manner in which business is conducted. Since many students may not have travelled extensively, they may not understand how differently business is conducted in other countries. Provide examples of how to conduct business with firms in South America, Japan, Germany, France, and so forth. Or, have students do some research on the internet to find country-specific information about business negotiations, high- and low-context cultures, and social customs (other than just dress and dining issues), all of which they can share with the class.

DISCUSS INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Helping students understand the importance of intercultural sensitivity often becomes a challenging task. Remember that your own classroom contains people from a range of backgrounds and experiences—but do not make individual students into representatives of various cultures or ethnicities.

During the class coverage of this topic, some students may argue that if a company from another part of the world wants to do business with a Canadian firm, then the other organization should adjust to Canadian business practices. Some will ask why Canadian companies are always expected to give in to the other companies' practices. Other students may suggest that if employees with different cultural backgrounds want to work in Canadian organizations, then they should be expected to adapt completely to Canadian cultural norms. Provide class time to discuss the benefits a diverse workforce brings to any organization. Focus on the benefits of respecting and acknowledging other cultures. Stress the idea of a win-win solution for companies with different cultural traditions.

EXPLAIN STEREOTYPING AND ETHNOCENTRISM

Although students should be able to define stereotyping, ethnocentrism may be a new concept. Engage students in a discussion of the term, giving examples to distinguish between ethnocentrism and stereotyping. Help students develop an understanding of how both concepts can contribute to ineffective communication.

EXPLORE ORAL COMMUNICATION

Students may not have had an opportunity to write messages to someone with another cultural background, but they may have numerous examples of communicating orally with someone who speaks more than one language. Lead a discussion about problems and successes they have encountered in these situations and ask what a businessperson can do to reduce those problems. Building on the oral communication discussion, help students develop a list of things they should do and things they should avoid when writing to an intercultural audience.

USING TECHNOLOGY

As we noted in the discussion around mobile technology, so-called digital natives may believe teaching and learning about communication technologies unnecessary. It's not. Technology isn't communication in itself, and technology can overwhelm the communication process. The long sidebar "Powerful Tools for Communicating Effectively" could be the basis for student discussion, a small-group activity, or even a short research-based response. Get students thinking and talking about how these tools, and new tools that have emerged since the

publication of the textbook, might be used for different workplace tasks. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these tools for various purposes? What ethical considerations must we make when we use them?

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM EXERCISES

1. *Get Acquainted.* To help start the class and the term in an enthusiastic manner, ask students to work in teams of two and interview each other. Give students five minutes to gather information about each other. You can either provide a list of facts you want the students to inquire about or invite the class to prepare a list of things they would like to know about each other. Once the students have completed their interviews, ask them to introduce each other using the information they gathered in their brief interviews. To put your students further at ease, you may want to participate by giving them comparable information about yourself. This exercise will help students get to know each other and develop a level of comfort with classmates early in the term.
2. *Teamwork Exercise.* Divide students into groups of six to eight and give each group a ball. Tell the group that its “mission” is to make sure each member of the group touches the ball at least once and that the team completing the task the fastest wins. (Students will often pass the ball around the group as fast as possible. Give them several chances to try new techniques or, if they do not seem to be trying new techniques, encourage them to do so. Generally, one or two groups will figure out that if one person holds the ball in the centre and the other students touch the ball simultaneously, they have discovered the quickest way to complete the task.)
3. *The Communication Process.* Assign students to work in teams. Each team should prepare its own interpretation of the communication process by drawing a communication model and labeling the various parts. Have the teams share and discuss their models with the rest of the class. This activity can help students comprehend the communication process while emphasizing that different ways of illustrating a concept or process can be acceptable.
4. *Ethical Communication.* Assign students to work in teams of two or three. Each team should prepare a list of ethical and unethical business communication examples members have heard or read about in recent months. Students may also include some examples from their places of employment. To help students get started, you may want to mention some communication examples from NorTel, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, Bell Canada, and other organizations that have come under fire in recent years for unethical communication actions. Based on examples the teams identify, conduct a discussion about committing to ethical communication, recognizing ethical choices, and making ethical choices.
5. *Culture.* Ask students to assume that they have travelled to another part of the country and have stopped to talk with a resident of the region. Ask students to prepare a list of the points they would mention if the local resident asked the students to describe the culture in which they currently live. This activity should generate some lively discussion about the various aspects of culture, especially if some class members are from different parts of Canada or from different countries. Students may also begin identifying misconceptions that others may have about the students' local culture, thus leading to a discussion of stereotyping and ethnocentrism.

6. *Intercultural Sensitivity.* Assign student teams to research a particular culture to identify differences in social customs and preferences or rules for conducting business. Make sure some of the students research high-context cultures and others research low-context cultures. Ask each team to share its findings in class. Use these findings as a basis for a discussion of high- and low-context cultures, social customs, and ethical issues in other cultures.
7. *Intercultural Sensitivity.* Invite a panel of businesspeople who grew up in different cultures to address your class. Ask panel members to comment on cultural differences in such areas as context, ethics, social customs, and nonverbal communication. Also ask them to share their knowledge about rules for conducting business in their cultures. If the panel contains persons from several different cultures, this should encourage a significant amount of discussion about intercultural communication.
8. *Gender Sensitivity.* Given the visibility of recent movements such as MeToo, our society appears to be thinking about harassment and assault in the workplace. How do harassment policies and other protections against bias and discrimination work? What are the ethics? What are the liabilities? What does a business need to balance? Students could discuss their thoughts in small groups, later shared with the class as a whole, or could develop individual written responses. You could even ask students to do research and create poster presentation around safe workplace policies.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE (p. 30)

- 1-1 Communication is important because you must be able to express your ideas clearly and persuasively. Strong communication skills will help you stand out from your competition.
- 1-2 The six traits of professionalism are striving to excel, being dependable and accountable, being a team player, demonstrating a sense of etiquette, making ethical decisions, and maintaining a positive outlook.
- 1-3 A sender in a social media environment initiates a conversation by sharing valuable information, rather than adopting a “we talk, you listen” model. The sender’s message is not fixed and may be reshaped as it is shared and discussed.
- 1-4 BYOD stands for “bring your own device,” which refers to settings where employees want to be able to use their personal smartphones and other devices to connect to company networks and files. These devices sometimes lack the security controls organizations require, and employees sometimes fail to use their devices in secure ways. These behaviours put organizational resources and content at risk.
- 1-5 An ethical dilemma is a situation where a person must choose from a number of alternatives that aren’t clear-cut in their implications.
- 1-6 An ethical lapse is a clearly unethical, and sometimes illegal, choice.

- 1-7 The potential advantages of a diverse workplace include having access to a broader spectrum of viewpoints and ideas, being better able to understand and identify with diverse markets, and benefitting from a wider range of employee talents.
- 1-8 Cultural competence refers to one's appreciation for cultural differences that affect communication and one's ability to change communication styles to ensure that communication is successful.

APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE (p. 30)

- 1-9 This question should help students organize their thoughts about how communication keeps organizations running, what business tasks require communication, and how communication benefits business organizations. Because of the larger social discussion around people's language skills at large, a recent graduate who has clear and persuasive communication—who is able to write well, speak well, listen well—and who can adjust communication style to suit the situation will be highly valued in the workplace.
- 1-10 Effective social media use engages users in a conversation. It's not the company telling; it's the company asking, listening, and responding. It's also the company loosening its control over its own messaging—something many businesses find challenging. This kind of use reflect the “you” attitude discussed in this chapter, in which messages are tailored to their recipients. The shift in mindset required for businesses to communicate this way is enormous; not every business is ready to make it, but successful businesses recognize that they must.
- 1-11 Responses to this question should isolate elements of the basic communication model and the social communication model and relate them to various examples of internal and external business communication. Understanding where communication has the potential to break down enables us to prevent a problem. Students should also think about the “you” attitude and how the social conversation model reflects a more inclusive form of communication that appeals to younger members of organizations and communities.
- 1-12 Responses to this question should reflect the ideas raised on page 13 about the challenges of reading on a small screen and the fact that most mobile users are multitasking. Sentences should be short, paragraphs should be short, items that require attention should have bullets or numerals, and the whole message should be as concise as possible without compromising professional communication standards.
- 1-13 Students should be able to see the potential loss of good people who, in this situation, may not have needed to leave the organization if layoffs did not occur. A dilemma normally poses at least two unattractive choices. Layoffs are not an attractive option; neither is losing good people unnecessarily. Although in the scenario the CEO is trying to be ethical and thoughtful, the advance warning could backfire in many ways, making it an equally unattractive option.
- 1-14 Awareness of one's own culture may help a person avoid ethnocentrism and may help a person perceive common ground between one culture and another. When you attempt to communicate with someone from another culture, you must recognize the

nuances of context and culture that underpin even our most basic interactions, and provide similar kinds of awareness and support for people from other cultures.

PRACTISE YOUR SKILLS (p. 30)

Activities

- 1-15 In these memos or speeches of introduction, students should include information about their majors, hobbies, likes, dislikes, and future career plans. This activity should give you an idea of the level of your students' writing or speaking skills, as well as help you get to know them.

- 1-16 This question provides an opportunity to observe students' familiarity with Twitter and their ability to produce crisp, meaningful messages in a confined space. Encourage students to consider how the content of their messages reflects not only the assigned requirements but also the expectations of the social communication model.

- 1-17 Through their selection of clips and their written submissions, students are reflecting their comprehension of the communication process and their current sense of "effectiveness." Posting suitable clips and commenting appropriately on others' clips demonstrates their effective participation in the social communication model. Follow-up discussion could touch on students' emerging sense of professionalism and ethics in the context of the classroom community.

- 1-18 Ideally, students should look at some examples of employment ads and identify key words to reflect in their brief responses. Regardless, their responses should demonstrate some or all of the traits identified with professionalism and should reflect employers' expectations identified in the chapter, particularly attention to grammar, spelling, and high-quality writing. The requirement to shape their own content to be appropriate for another person's needs (the audience-focused element) will be difficult for some writers.

- 1-19 Student answers might mention that every employee is a representative of the organization and employee behaviour should protect the company's reputation; thus, all employees should receive etiquette training. Answers might also focus on the diverse and changing workplace, with more emphasis placed on teams and flattened management hierarchies; with these changes, more and more employees might be coming into contact with high-profile clients and may need guidance.

- 1-20 This exercise asks students to apply their understanding of audience-centred communication. They should be thinking about how to tailor the report to the readers and their needs.

- 1-21 This exercise challenges students to apply their understanding of the communication process. Ask them to be specific about how they encoded and transmitted the idea they wanted to share; also ask them to explain exactly how they knew whether the

message had been accurately decoded. Students might identify such barriers as a difference in perception due to differences in age, background, culture, or language; a lack of credibility, precision, congeniality, or control; a lack of information about the audience; a misunderstanding caused by unfocused, incoherent, or sloppy communication; one party being sidetracked or bringing up unnecessary information; an inability to relate new information to existing ideas; or the noise from environmental distractions, including the emotional states of the people involved or a person's poor listening ability.

- 1-22 Students should avoid the tendency to simply explain how widespread the use of social media has become, and how easy it is to use the technology. Instead, encourage them to adopt an audience-centred approach that clearly explains the potential benefits of embracing social media as a means of improving the company's relationship with current and potential customers.
- 1-23 This exercise, which should be fun for students, invites them to look critically at their own user experiences and connect these experiences to the larger practice of business communication.
- 1-24 These questions are excellent for small-group and whole-class discussions.
- a) It is unethical to keep quiet about the possible hazard. Beyond the environmental damage that may affect a large number of people, the hazard may expose the company to legal liability.
 - b) It is unethical to overpromise and under-deliver, particularly with management. The consequences may affect many people. Clarity and persuasion should be more effective than hyperbole and deception, and if they are not, perhaps you can approach the issue in another way.
 - c) While it is common to have the kind of conversation described, it is somewhat unethical to spread this information, since you came by it illegitimately. The colleague may experience a loss of morale and engagement, which is harmful to that colleague, and if the colleague decides to leave the company, the company may lose a good person unnecessarily. Do recognize, however, that the rumour mill is a significant form of organizational communication.
 - d) Again, while it is common to misrepresent information as described, it is unethical to do so. You have in effect lied to your manager. Without good and complete information, the manager may make a bad decision that may have lasting consequences for the entire organization. If you are discovered, you may be disciplined, and your manager may lose trust in you and your judgment.
- 1-25 Students might mention the employees should always consult a company's code of ethics (if one exists) before writing anything associated with the company. Students opposed to a ban may argue that it is an individual's ethical responsibility to alert the public to serious concerns about an organization and that a policy that bans criticism is unfair and unjust. Additionally, they might note that a post containing valid criticism of the company may appear as more authentic and credible than posts that just praise a company. Students supporting a ban may argue that any external communication about a company must be examined by that company since an employee could post something untrue; moreover, if employees are being paid to blog, then the company has

a right to edit content. Students may want to discuss social media policies, what they contain, and how they could lead to or prevent ethical dilemmas. Social media policies should make explicit how employees are expected to represent themselves and the organization on social media (personal *and* professional), who is responsible for the content on company blogs, and how content will be edited. You may want to encourage students to think about organizational resources for airing concerns and for solving problems beyond publishing grievances on blogs and criticizing or embarrassing the company in public.

- 1-26 This exercise asks students to consider a possible ethical dilemma: choosing among alternatives that aren't clear-cut. Students might mention that if employees are violating company policy, then they should be reported; however, others might mention that the boss is unfairly taking advantage of the fact that this person has numerous friends within the company. The questions that need to be asked before the employee makes a decision include whether the situation been defined fairly and accurately, what the intention of communicating this information is, what impact this information will have on the people who are affected by it, whether this information will achieve the greatest possible good while doing the least possible harm, whether this decision will seem unethical in the future, and whether we are comfortable with this decision. Would both parties be proud to describe the situation to someone they respect? Students might also want to discuss whether or not the company has a code of ethics, whether or not employees are aware of company policies and the consequences for violating them, and whether or not the boss has asked others to report this type of information to her as well.
- 1-27 Students should focus their evaluation of the situation on the differences in communication style between high-context and low-context cultures. The Japanese manufacturer's representative clearly has a problem with the terms of the deal and is expressing that concern indirectly. Coming from a high-context culture, he is interested in building relationships. The boss of the Canadian toy company, coming from a low-context culture, misinterprets the and focuses on conveying information—the terms of the contract—rather than realizing that the issue could be that the manufacturer's representative may have a problem with the one-sided nature of the proposed agreement. After studying the examples included in this chapter, students also may recognize the dropped eyes, soft tone, and vague answers as the Japanese businessperson's way of showing respect and saying no indirectly so that the Canadian negotiator would be able to save face.
- 1-28 Students will come up with a variety of examples. Remind them of the importance of an audience-centred approach that respects the appropriate level of formality and avoids culture-based expressions and idioms.
- 1-29 Students should find this assignment interesting. A number of books are available on international business communication, and many of them provide country-by-country information. As an option, you may suggest that some students pick two countries and compare their customs, describing the similarities and differences in nonverbal communication, meeting protocol, decision-making processes, and so on. To make this activity more focused, assign each student or team one type of business practice, such

as gift giving, and ask them to describe how that practice varies in a dozen or so countries.

- 1-30 The role-playing should reveal how easily we slip into ethnocentric and stereotypical viewpoints—which interfere with business communication even when the difference is one of age, gender, or physical ability. To deal with the problem, try to view issues from the other person's perspective.
- 1-31 This four-part exercise will teach students about the specific generations they research as well as the generations researched by classmates. They will learn which qualities the generations share as well as the differences, especially in communication styles, and consider the advantages of a multigenerational workforce, as each one possesses specific strengths that the others may lack.
- 1-32 To improve the discussion that this exercise can generate, consider assigning different services to different students. The wide variety of services students will access can provide powerful evidence of how widespread the social communication model has become. You may want to offer follow-up questions about the presence of culture-based idiom and assumptions within media that are widely available across international borders, or representations of users and content that suggest ethnocentric or stereotypical views.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION NOTEBOOK

APPLICATIONS FOR SUCCESS

1. Every culture has its own style of humour, making it difficult for humour to cross cultural boundaries. Humour also often requires exceptional knowledge of a language and can be easily misinterpreted by someone from a different culture. It is best to avoid humour.
2. Before doing business with a different culture, you should know its protocol concerning a variety of customs, including forms of address, hierarchy, names, and titles; forms of greeting and introduction; business card exchange; gift-giving; gestures and body language; time, space, and punctuality; meeting and seating; hosting and being hosted; scheduling appointments; business entertaining; dining and drinking etiquette, including giving toasts; and proper cyber-communication etiquette.
3. Examples of gift-giving taboos include never giving a gift the receiver can't reciprocate, especially in Asian cultures. In China, one should never give a gift wrapped in white or black. Also, one should not give a gift to the opposite gender within a business context, because it implies a more personal meaning.

CHAPTER 1 POP QUIZ

True-False

1. Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages. (True)
2. In the first step of the communication process, the sender transmits the message. (False)

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3. The primary characteristic of the social communication model is that it reflects a *broadcast* or *publishing* mindset. (False)
4. Organizations that encourage staff to "BYOD" have fewer concerns with privacy and security. (False)
5. Selective misquoting may involve omitting damaging comments to paint a better picture of you or your company. (True)
6. An ethical dilemma involves making a clearly unethical or illegal choice. (False)
7. By adopting an audience-centred approach, the writer presents the message in a way that emphasizes the writer's point of view, not the reader's. (False)
8. In a low-context culture, people rely more on the context of nonverbal actions and environmental setting to convey meaning. (False)
9. Simple hand gestures convey the same meaning in every culture. (False)
10. Ethnocentrism allows communicators to correctly interpret the customs of another culture. (False)

Multiple Choice

11. Which of the following is a tangible benefit of effective communication in an organization?
 - a. Faster problem solving
 - b. Increased productivity
 - c. Greater employee engagement
 - d. All of the above**
12. The Canadian workforce includes growing numbers of people with various ethnic backgrounds. This will require the effective communicator to
 - a. Communicate in team-based organizations
 - b. Communicate in an age of information
 - c. Communicate within a culturally diverse workforce**
 - d. None of the above
13. What is a communication medium?
 - a. The form a message takes**
 - b. The system used to deliver a message
 - c. The process of communicating between sender and receiver
 - d. None of the above
14. Which of the following questions is NOT a question that can help you make an ethical communication decision?
 - a. Is this message legal?
 - b. Is this message feasible?
 - c. Is this a message you can live with?

- d. **All are questions that can help you make an ethical decision.**
15. What are assistive technologies?
- a. **Technologies such as touch screens and voice recognition that help employees who have disabilities.**
 - b. Technologies that support communicators in reaching wider audiences.
 - c. Technologies that stand in lieu of a physical presence, such as Skype.
 - d. None of the above.
16. Informal social rules are
- a. Specifically taught “rights” and “wrongs” of how to behave.
 - b. **Usually learned by watching how people behave and then imitating that behaviour.**
 - c. Another way to describe dining manners.
 - d. Avoided by cultures that condemn materialism.
17. When communicators assume that their own cultural background is superior to all others, they are using which of the following concepts?
- a. Stereotyping
 - b. **Ethnocentrism**
 - c. Accurate assumptions
 - d. Social status
18. When speaking to someone whose first language is different from yours, you should
- a. **Use objective, accurate language.**
 - b. Use slang and clichés.
 - c. Ask the listener, “Is this too difficult for you?”
 - d. Speak rapidly since the listener is accustomed to rapid speech in his or her first language.
19. When writing to someone whose first language is different from yours, you should
- a. Include lengthy sentences, using many compound and complex sentences.
 - b. **Use figures instead of writing numbers out in words.**
 - c. Include slang, idioms, and jargon.
 - d. Do none of the above, since these are things to avoid in intercultural written communication.
20. Cultural diversity includes all of the following *except*
- a. Age differences
 - b. Nonverbal communication
 - c. Ability differences
 - d. **All of the above**