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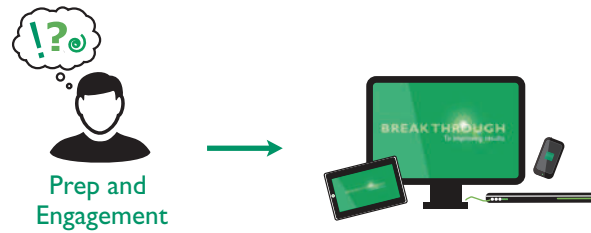


# BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Polishing Your Professional Presence

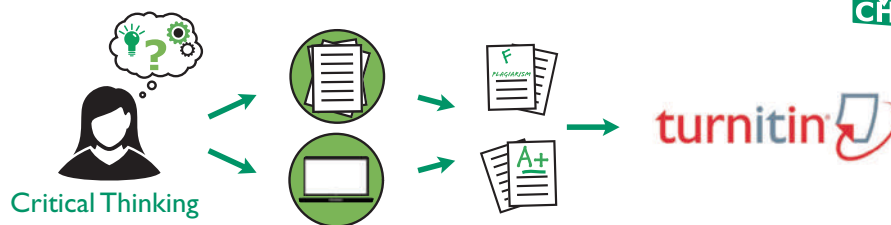
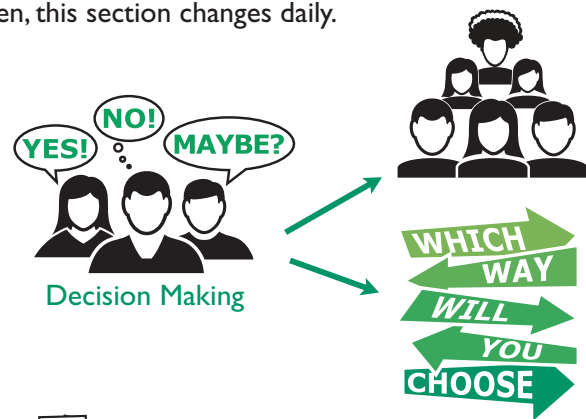
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# **BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**

Polishing Your Professional Presence

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# BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Polishing Your Professional Presence

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# Dedication

*To our husbands for their partnership in both our personal and professional lives, and to our families for their patience with and support of all our endeavors.*

*To our students for challenging us to learn more every day, to stretch our perspectives, and to be better teachers.*

*To our colleagues in our universities, in the Association for Business Communication, and in business for providing valuable feedback and insight about best practices in polishing professional presence.*

–Barbara and Lisa

## About the Authors



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Barbara Shwom, PhD, is Professor of Instruction in Writing at Northwestern University, where she teaches in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, Kellogg School of Management, and McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science. For more than 30 years, she has designed and taught communication courses that have influenced this textbook, including *Writing in Organizations*, *Communicating Complex Data*, *Engineering Design and Communication*, and *How to Become an Expert in Roughly 10 Weeks*. Professor Shwom's teaching at Northwestern has been recognized by both an outstanding teacher award and an appointment as a fellow of Northwestern's Searle Center for Teaching Excellence. Professor Shwom has gained industry experience as the managing principal of Communication Partners, a consulting practice that works with clients from a range of industries, including biotechnology, high tech research and development, pharmaceuticals, manage-

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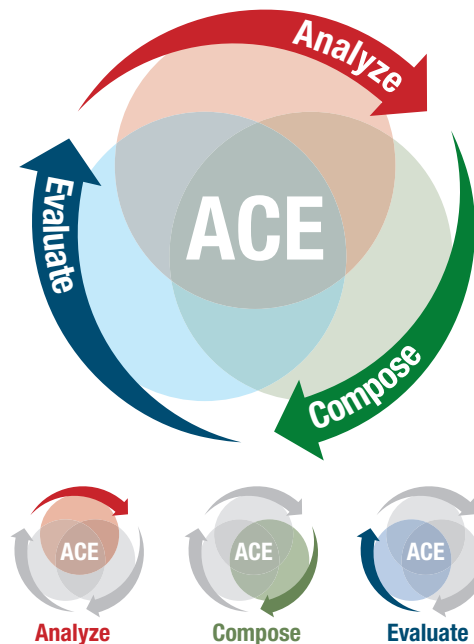
# Visual Walk-Through

## NEW

A new chapter focuses on how businesses develop a social media strategy and use social media to communicate with stakeholders. This chapter complements integrated social media content throughout the text, including relevant and timely social media applications and examples, as well as social media exercises in every end-of-chapter section.

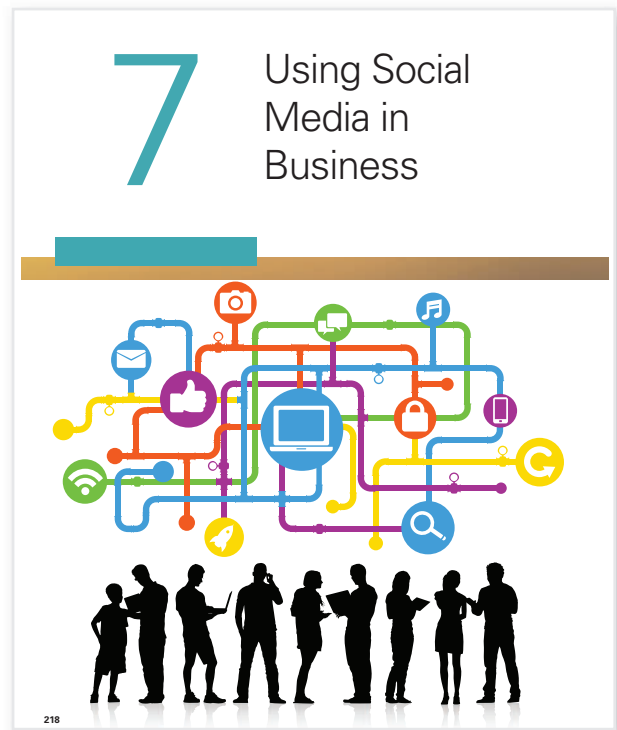
## Get the Best Results from Your Communication

At the heart of the book is a flexible communication process called ACE—Analyzing, Composing, and Evaluating—that applies to any situation, from simple email messages to formal business presentations. As you go through the book, you continue to acquire knowledge about how to apply this framework and why it is important.



## NEW

A laminated pull-out reference card on how to write business email is provided that you can use throughout the course and after the course ends.



*“I anticipate using the ACE communication process beyond this course when I write emails, prepare papers, and apply for internships and jobs because the first impression of writing is very important.”*

—Andronico P., Student at the University of California–Santa Barbara

### How to Write Effective Business Email

Email is the most widely used written business communication medium\* and is appropriate for both informal and formal messages. To ensure you use an effective writing process, apply the ACE model—even for short, informal messages.



**Analyze** your purpose, audience, and content before you begin writing.  
**Compose** by organizing the content, creating a first draft, and designing a professional format.  
**Evaluate** by revising, editing, proofreading, and—when possible—incorporating feedback.

This reference guide provides advice about how to write an effective business email from the top down, from entering the recipients on the “To” line to the complimentary closing and signature block.

#### Recipients

##### What are the To, Cc, and Bcc lines used for?

- **To:** The “To” line is for the primary audience of your message. When writing to several people, separate email addresses with commas.
- **Cc:** The “Cc” line (“courtesy copy”) is for the secondary audience of your message—people who may need to know the information but are not the primary audience. For example, you might Cc your supervisor as an FYI or your assistant to help you follow up.
- **Bcc:** The “Bcc” line (“blind courtesy copy”) is used in two circumstances: (1) when you have a long distribution list that you don’t want to show and (2) when you need to send the message to someone without the knowledge of the primary (or secondary) audience. In this second situation, you could alternatively forward your sent message with an explanation.

#### Subject Line

##### How do you write a good subject line?

- Keep the subject line short, but meaningful.
- If the subject line needs to be longer than five words, begin the subject line with the most important information so the recipients can determine whether they need to read your email now or later. Examples: “Meeting request,” “Important: Buy your plane tickets today,” and “Response needed: Is any money left in the account?”

#### Attachments

##### How should you announce that an attachment is included?

- If the recipient requested the information in the attachment, mention the attachment in the first paragraph.
- If you are including the attachment as supplemental information, mention the attachment in the body or closing of the message.

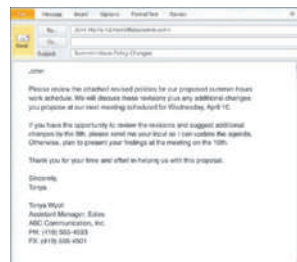
##### What guidelines should you use for attachments?

- **Size:** Try to keep attachments to 10 Mb or less. Many businesses impose a size limit on attachments. For larger files, ensure your audience can receive them, or upload your files to an online service like DropBox and include a link in your email.
- **Format:** If the recipient needs to modify the attachment, send it in its original format, such as a Word or Excel file. However, if you don’t want the recipient to modify the file, send it as a PDF, which also reduces the file size.

#### Salutation

##### What’s the best salutation to use? And how do you punctuate salutations?

- When writing to co-workers you know well, use just their first name or precede it with “Hi” as a friendly gesture. Punctuate this in one of two ways. You can use a comma to separate the greeting from the person’s name and add a colon at the end (“Hi, John:”). Alternatively, you can use just a comma at the end (“Hi, John”).
- When writing to superiors, colleagues you don’t know well, or people outside your organization, use good judgment based on how you would address the recipient in person. In formal situations, last names may be appropriate (“Dear Mr. Smith,” or “Hello, Mr. Smith.”). Note that no comma separates “Dear” from the name. End with a colon or comma, depending on the level.

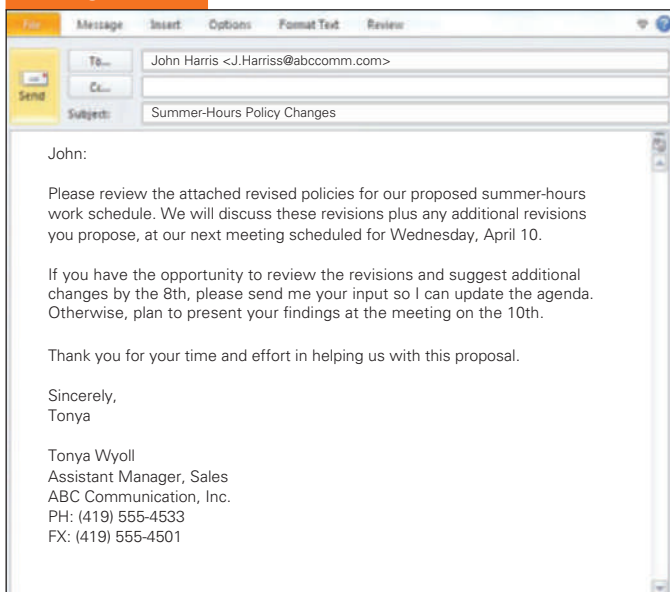


## Business Focus

An “@WORK” section in each chapter highlights contemporary businesses and professionals who are implementing the core concepts of each chapter.

## Practical Advice

**EFFECTIVE**



**To:** John Harris <J.Harris@abccomm.com>  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Summer-Hours Policy Changes

John:

Please review the attached revised policies for our proposed summer-hours work schedule. We will discuss these revisions plus any additional revisions you propose, at our next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 10.

If you have the opportunity to review the revisions and suggest additional changes by the 8th, please send me your input so I can update the agenda. Otherwise, plan to present your findings at the meeting on the 10th.



Thank you for your time and effort in helping us with this proposal.

Sincerely,  
Tonya

Tonya Wyoll  
Assistant Manager, Sales  
ABC Communication, Inc.  
PH: (419) 555-4533  
FX: (419) 555-4501

**ACE @ WORK Coca-Cola Company**

Social media has revolutionized how people communicate. Facebook, for example, has more than 800 million users who use the site to stay in touch with family, friends, and coworkers. Like individuals, companies recognize and use the power of social media to communicate in creative ways. The Coca-Cola Company is world-renowned for being an effective user of social media. For many years, Coca-Cola has ranked first in the number of Facebook fans among all companies. As of October 2014, Coca-Cola had almost 90 million likes. Red Bull was a distant second with 46 million.



“likes” in the kind of social media entry that prompts people to tell their own Coca-Cola stories.

- **Composing.** How does Coca-Cola go about composing stories that provoke interest and encourage others to tell Coke stories? The company uses an approach it calls “systemic storytelling.” This approach involves breaking a story down into small incremental elements that can be dispersed through multiple social media channels to involve its audiences in a conversation about the brand. Consumer responses via social media expand the story. On Flickr, consumers are invited to post photographs—visual stories—of their experiences with Coca-Cola. On the “Heritage” portion of the Coca-Cola website and on Facebook, consumers are invited to share their verbal stories.
- The distribution of creativity expands connectivity, empowers consumers, and creates new content. According to Milderhall, “consumer-generated stories outnumber Coca-Cola company-generated stories on most of our brands.”
- **Evaluating.** Coca-Cola continuously monitors all of its social media communication. Coke’s social media team reads consumers’ stories and feedback to evaluate the success of the social media strategy as a whole, and to respond to individual issues as they arise. In addition, Wendy Clark, Coca-Cola’s Senior Vice President of Integrated Marketing, states that Coke answers every question posted to the Twitter account, which requires more personnel than its customer service telephone lines.

Coca-Cola has achieved this level of social media participation—an average of 15,000 social media conversations a day about the Coca-Cola Company—by following a well-designed social media strategy that involves collaborating with customers to build stories about the brand. The ACE communication model can help us understand how Coca-Cola achieves its social media goals.

- **Analyzing.** According to Jonathan Milderhall, Coca-Cola’s Vice President of Global Advertising Strategy and Creative Excellence, Coca-Cola’s goal is to compose the “world’s most engaging content” by telling verbal and visual stories about Coke that are so lively, positive, and “contagious” that they encourage people to tell their own Coke stories, earning Coca-Cola a “disproportionate share of popular culture.” Being successful at this strategy requires Coca-Cola to analyze which stories will provoke interest and show people’s emotional attachment to the brand and determine which technology platforms—or mediums—can best tell the story. A YouTube video about a Coke Happiness Machine, which generated more than 15,000

Clearly, Coca-Cola has leveraged social media outlets as an effective method of communicating. CEO Marston Kent stated, “The world of communication is evolving at a fast pace. . . . Today consumers are much more empowered. You need to communicate with them. . . . [We have] the largest Facebook page of any single brand—and it wasn’t even created by us. . . . Five years ago social media was 2% of our total media spending. Today it’s more than 20% and growing fast.”

*“I like all the examples of the various communications, such as emails, memos, thank-you notes, etc. I use them as a guide when I am writing.”*

—Kenneth P., Student at Middle Tennessee State University

## New Hires @ Work

**Ryan Croy**  
University of Tennessee  
Content Writer @ Asurion

I’ve built credibility in two ways: intelligent communication and dependability. The way you ask for something is just as important as what you’re asking for. When I request a favor, I offer something in return. Even if there isn’t much I can do for that person, he will remember (and appreciate!) the gesture. It’s also important to be reliable. If somebody asks you to do something, do it—and get it back to her before the deadline. You earn more responsibility as you build a dependable reputation.



Photo courtesy of Ryan Croy

## UPDATED

## New Hires @ Work

The New Hires @ Work feature helps you imagine yourself as part of a larger business communication community. At the beginning of each chapter, and on select pages within each chapter, a recent graduate describes communication challenges on the job and how communication skills help meet those challenges.

## Ethics, Technology, and Culture

Every chapter includes an in-depth focus on ethics, technology, and culture. To build your skills in these areas, you will see end-of-chapter exercises linked to each feature that challenge you to think critically about these topics and provide you with hands-on practice.



### TECHNOLOGY

#### COMPOSING A PERSUASIVE RECOMMENDATION WITH PRESENTATION SOFTWARE

When you need to make a recommendation to a small group or even to just one person, you may decide to present the information in slide format rather than create a word-processed report or handout. Businesses are increasingly using presentation software as a composing tool for sharing information that needs to be read, presented, and discussed interactively. These *boardroom presentations* are designed so that they can stand alone and be read independently, in contrast to *ballroom presentations* that are designed to be visual support for a presenter.<sup>27</sup>

Recommendation presentations, like all boardroom presentations, provide all their evidence and reasoning clearly on the slides so that the audience can refer to the slides later when making decisions. Four key principles will help you create a logical and persuasive recommendation presentation:

1. Organize your presentation into well-defined sections that

3. Write *message headlines*: short sentences or meaningful phrases at the top of the slide that represent your main ideas.
4. Present material in the body of the slide that supports the main idea in your headline.

To see these four principles in action, review the following recommendation presentation prepared by a not-for-profit organization focused on health and nutrition. The slides are designed to be presented in meetings with individuals who will introduce legislation requiring

As you read the presentation principles. The presentation item, Causes, and Proposed Solution. The main idea. Message headline from slide to slide. And, the slide's headline.



### ETHICS

#### IS BLIND CARBON COPY (bcc) LIKE SPYING?

In your email program, the bcc—*blind carbon copy*—feature allows you to copy someone on an email without the recipient knowing it. Does sharing an email “secretly” with someone else raise any ethical issues? Consider three different scenarios for sending a bcc:

- **Using bcc to reduce long recipient lists.** You send an email to all employees who are late submitting their travel reimbursement requests and warn them that they will not be reimbursed unless they submit their requests today. The list of names is long, and if you pasted all the email addresses into the email cc box, it would fill the screen. By using the bcc feature, you help ensure that your recipients focus on the message content rather than be distracted by an overly long header.  
*In this case, the use of bcc is very functional.* You can also argue that it is more ethical than including everyone on the cc line. Recipients don't need to know the names and email addresses of all the others who have missed the deadline. Making this information visible in the email may embarrass some people on the list.
- **Using bcc to enable centralized tracking of information.** You report group for one of the

The technical support people would act no differently if they knew the head of IT was copied or if the copying was blind.

- **Using bcc to share information with interested parties.** You write an email to negotiate the price of a product with a new supplier. Your colleague in another department in your company has asked to be bcc'd on your messages to this supplier. She wants inside information so that she can negotiate a low price with the same supplier on a different product she intends to buy. She would prefer that the supplier not know that she has this information. Your colleague argues that her main responsibility is to get the lowest price possible for your company. She has an obligation to use whatever information is available to get that low price.  
*This use of a bcc could be considered unethical* since your colleague intends to use the information to disadvantage the recipient.

As you compose emails, how do you decide if you should use a bcc and if it is ethical? Apply these two tests:

1. Are you trying to deceive the “to” recipient by hiding the fact that other people also will receive the email?
2. Can the recipient be disadvantaged or hurt if the content in the email is shared with the bcc readers and the recipient



### CULTURE

#### DID YOU HEAR THE BAD NEWS?

In the United States and many other Western business cultures, people tend to communicate bad news explicitly. They may soften the bad news by using a buffer or subordinating it, but at some point in the message, they will state the bad news. For example, if you ask an American whether he has finished analyzing data for a meeting, a bad-news answer might sound like this:

- Although the analysis isn't complete, we have enough for the meeting.
- The analysis was more difficult than I anticipated, so I'm not quite ready.

Sometimes an American will imply the bad news, but even then the message is obvious.

- If we can move the meeting to Friday, I'll be able to complete the analysis.

By contrast, in many Eastern cultures, including India, people say “no” in a very different way. They may ignore the question, change the subject, respond with another question, or make a statement

- Is tomorrow good for you?
- Let me ask my team.
- We'll try our best.
- We have been working late every night.

Within the Indian culture, these answers would not be considered evasive. The audience would understand that all these answers equally mean that the analysis is not ready and the speaker is uncomfortable saying “no.”

When you communicate with people from different cultures, listen very carefully to be sure you hear the bad news and do not assume a positive answer. Similarly, you may need to change the way you deliver bad news—and even good news. For example, if an American answers “*the analysis will probably be ready*,” someone from India may assume that you are saying “no.” Any kind of qualification or hesitation will be perceived as a negative reply. The best way to say yes in India is to say “yes” and to repeat the detail:

- Yes, we will be ready tomorrow.

*“We encounter all three in the modern workplace and to exclude them from our teaching would be negligent. I like the integration into each chapter because it mirrors actual practice where these features are married to our day-to-day business communication functions and part of our response consideration.”*

—Gina L. Genova, Professor at University of California–Santa Barbara

We have created a focused book that effectively presents and practices the core communication competencies in 12 chapters. Part 1 addresses the core communication competencies of business communication, ranging from audience analysis and the communication process to document design, intercultural communication, and collaboration. The remaining parts focus on specific applications of these competencies: delivering effective messages through traditional, electronic, and social media; researching, proposing, reporting, and presenting; and applying and interviewing for a job.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

#### 501 What are the benefits of analyzing? pages 77–81

- Analyzing the purpose focuses the message
- Analyzing the audience helps you meet their needs
- Analyzing the content ensures a complete message
- Analyzing the medium helps you choose the best delivery option

#### 502 What is involved in composing? pages 82–90

- Deciding when and where to compose
- Organizing the message
- Drafting the content
- Designing a professional format and delivery

#### 503 How does evaluating improve your communication? pages 91–99

- Evaluating content helps you achieve your purpose and outcome
- Evaluating for clarity and conciseness improves comprehension
- Evaluating for style and tone helps you project a professional image
- Evaluating for correctness increases your credibility
- Reviewing feedback helps you become a better communicator

The book's main headings are structured as numbered study questions. These questions are answered in subheadings throughout the section. The end-of-chapter summary and "Key Concept Exercises" are also grouped by both the study question and the subheadings. This structure helps you focus on the key points of the chapter, assess what you know, and complete exercises that help you polish your skills.

## CASE SCENARIO

### Working as a Cross-Cultural Team

This case scenario will help you review the chapter material by applying it to a specific situation.

The first three weeks of your internship at Baer, Kramer, & Dreslin Market Research in Nashville were great. You enjoyed brainstorming marketing ideas with your manager and designing a survey for an important client. However, the past week has been pure misery. Your supervisor assigned you to join three other interns on a team to create a comprehensive online handbook for interns. Each summer, the company hires seven interns at your location in Nashville and seven more in the company's data processing department in New Delhi, India. You will work on your project with one other intern from the Nashville office and two interns from New Delhi.

Planning the first meeting was difficult. You lost two days of work trying to set a meeting time because there is a 10 1/2-hour time difference between Nashville and New Delhi: at 9 AM Central Daylight Time in Nashville, it is 7:30 PM in New Delhi. You suggested a 7 AM teleconference, but your Nashville teammate, Roberto, said he could not arrive in the office early for a meeting. You suggest an 8:30 AM teleconference, which would be 7 PM in New Delhi, but both your New Delhi teammates, Maansi and Anant, are vague about whether they could stay late. You beg Roberto to arrange to get to work early just one day so that your team can hold a kick-off meeting. Roberto admits that he could easily get to the office early, but prefers to sleep later. "And anyway," he admits, "I didn't sign up for human resources work when I accepted an internship in consumer research. How will this help me get a job?"

Finally, you are able to convince Roberto to accommodate Maansi and Anant. The first meeting is scheduled for 7:30 AM Central Daylight Time. The meeting seems to begin well enough. Everyone arrives on time, the teleconferencing system works, and the meeting starts with friendly introductions. Within five minutes, though, you know you are in trouble. When Anant introduces himself, he speaks so quickly that you miss everything he says. You would be too embarrassed to ask him to repeat it, so you remain quiet and pretend to understand. After the introductions, things get worse. No one has thought to make an agenda, so no one knows what the team is trying to accomplish. After a few moments of painful silence, you say, "Well maybe we should just start sharing ideas about coming up with a plan for the online handbook."

Anant jumps right in. You don't understand much of what he says, but you do hear the words "user interface," "programming," "database," and "search functions." You and Roberto look at each other in amazement. Why is Anant talking about computer programming? And why is he continuing to talk without stopping for five minutes? Is it rude to interrupt? Finally, Roberto says, "Anant, it sounds like you may have some good ideas, but we don't understand. We thought our job was to plan an online handbook." Anant replied, "That's what I'm talking about." Throughout all of this Maansi remains silent. After the first meeting, you feel that it is going to be a long five weeks until the end of your summer internship.

**Question 1:** What interpersonal, intercultural, and teamwork communication issues are emerging in this scenario?

#### Listening for Understanding

After your first team meeting, Roberto says, "It doesn't sound like Maansi and Anant will be too helpful on this project. Maybe we should

at a good point. The project would be easier to complete without participating in a cross-cultural team. And you ask yourself "Why are Maansi and Anant on this team? Why am I on this team? What are we supposed to be doing?"

You decide that this confusion stems from a communication problem—not with Maansi and Anant but with your supervisor. You thought you were listening intently when she asked you to "come up with a plan for an online handbook." But did you really understand what she meant? You were too intimidated to ask any clarifying questions:

- What does "plan" mean? What is the goal of the team?
- Is there some reason you and Roberto were put on the team? Is there some specific reason Maansi and Anant are on the team?
- What should be the final deliverable this summer?

With these questions in mind, you propose this plan to Roberto: "Let's try to arrange a meeting with our supervisor this afternoon. Rather than just sitting there and listening, let's ask lots of questions to be sure we understand. At the end of the meeting, we can summarize what we learned and email it to Maansi and Anant. We need to be sure we all have the same idea of what we are supposed to do."

**Question 2:** Listening involves a number of specific skills: hearing, comprehending and interpreting, evaluating, and responding. Which of these areas contributed to the communication problem in this scenario? Identify specific examples.

#### Framing Negative Criticism Positively

Fortunately, the meeting with your supervisor is helpful. Through much questioning and paraphrasing, you and Roberto identify four tasks for the summer: evaluate the material in the current paper handbook, gather information from current interns in both locations, put together a content outline for the website, and develop an easy-to-use structure for the website.

Although the meeting is successful, you are angry at Roberto because he simply cannot hide his contempt for this project. Before the meeting, he whispers to you, "Let's just get this meeting over with. No one needs a handbook. This project is just more busywork for interns." You find it difficult to begin focusing on content in the meeting because you are fuming about Roberto's attitude. Originally, you were looking forward to working with Roberto because he is smart and creative, but now you are afraid that his attitude may stand in the way of completing the project.

You prepare two different ways to talk with Roberto about this:

- **Option 1:** "Roberto, you are so negative all the time. I know you really don't want to do this project, but that's our job. We both need good evaluations from this internship. If you don't change your mind-set, you'll cause us both to fail."
- **Option 2:** "Roberto, I'm really looking forward to working with you. You always have such great ideas. But, I'm worried that you don't think this project is important and won't give it your best effort. I want to get a strong evaluation from this internship. I know if we work together we can plan a great handbook—and I think we can have a good time working together."

**Question 3:** How would you describe the difference between the two approaches? Which approach would help Roberto accept the

## Case Scenario

Each chapter concludes with a realistic case scenario that relates to the content of the chapter. This feature is an excellent tool for reviewing the chapter content to ensure that you have learned it and can apply it.

### Sentence-level skills diagnostic test

The following test covers common sentence-level errors. After you have completed the test, ask your instructor for the answer sheet to score your answers. Use the **Skills Assessment Table** following the test to record your scores in each category. The assessment will identify the skill areas you need to strengthen and where to find their associated rules in this appendix.

#### Use and Formation of Nouns and Pronouns

Each of the following sentences is either correct or contains an error. If the sentence is correct, write "C" in the blank. If the sentence contains an error, underline the error and write the correct form in the blank.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Our supervisor wanted George and I to come in early on Tuesday.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If your sure that everyone has left, turn out the lights.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I will speak with whoever is in the office this morning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ For three months in a row this Dealership had the highest sales.
- \_\_\_\_\_ There are fewer jobs and less employments during a recession.

#### Use and Formation of Adjectives and Adverbs

Each of the following sentences is either correct or contains an error. If the sentence is correct, write "C" in the blank. If the sentence contains an error, underline the error and write the correct form in the blank.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Most consumers prefer the least costly of the two service plans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ He sees badly in the dark because of his cataracts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Remember to drive slow in a school zone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wasn't it snowing real hard last evening?
- \_\_\_\_\_ The timing of the winter sale was absolutely perfect.

#### Sentence Fragments, Run-On (Fused) Sentences, and Comma Splices

Each of the following sentences is either correct or incorrect. If the sentence is correct, write "C" in the blank. If it is incorrect, insert the punctuation and/or wording that would make the sentence correct. Adjust capitalization as necessary.

- \_\_\_\_\_ When people enjoy their jobs. They usually perform better.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Many younger employees rate job satisfaction over high salary; they want meaningful work.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Baby boomers, on the other hand, have spent their lives working to get ahead their goal has been to reach the top.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Finding the right balance between work, family, and leisure that fits a person's personal and professional goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Women usually have a more difficult time than men, however, achieving this balance.

#### Subject-Verb Agreement and Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Each of the following sentences is either correct or contains an error. If the sentence is correct, write "C" in the blank. If the sentence contains an error, write the correction in the blank.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Each generation defines their relationship to work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ There is sometimes considerable differences in attitudes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Members of one generation believes in "living to work."
- \_\_\_\_\_ Conversely, the goals and philosophy of the next generation is "working to live."
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be satisfied, everybody has to find what works best for them.

#### Commas

Each of the following sentences is either correct or incorrect in its use of commas. If the sentence is correct, write "C" next to it. If it is incorrect, insert or delete punctuation to make it correct.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Many cultures value recreation, and family time highly and business practices reflect these norms.
- \_\_\_\_\_ In Europe for example workers get at least a month of vacation in the summer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Although some businesses stay open many are closed for most of August.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Posting an "On Vacation" sign in the window collecting the family and gassing up the car business owners across the continent head for the beach or the mountains.
- \_\_\_\_\_ This practice of closing up shop and going on vacation for a month which annoys Americans traveling abroad in August is considered "therapeutic and necessary for good physical and mental health" says Doris Pernegger an Austrian travel agent.

#### Commas and Semicolons

Each of the following sentences is either correct or incorrect in its use of commas and semicolons. If the sentence is correct, write "C" next to it. If it is incorrect, insert or delete punctuation to make it correct.

- \_\_\_\_\_ In France the workweek is 35 hours; but most Americans still work a 40-hour week.

## Comprehensive Grammar Review

Appendix C includes a complete grammar text that you can use for reference or for independent review. You can test your knowledge with exercises at the end of each chapter. Answers are in Appendix D.

# Instructor Resources

At the Instructor Resource Center, [www.pearsonhighered.com/irc](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc), instructors can easily register to gain access to a variety of instructor resources available with this text in downloadable format. If assistance is needed, our dedicated technical support team is ready to help with the media supplements that accompany this text. Visit <http://247.pearsoned.com> for answers to frequently asked questions and toll-free user support phone numbers.

The following supplements are available with this text:

- Instructor's Resource Manual
- Test Bank
- TestGen® Computerized Test Bank
- PowerPoint Presentations

# Acknowledgments

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# **BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**

Polishing Your Professional Presence

# 1

# Developing Your Professional Presence



# STUDY QUESTIONS

**SO1** Why is it challenging to communicate well? pages 4–6

Communication is a complex process  
Communication is affected by context  
Communication is more than transmission of messages

**SO3** What characteristics will help you communicate effectively? pages 8–19

Being strategic  
Being professional  
Being adaptable

**SO2** What are the benefits of being a good communicator? pages 6–8

Effective business communicators have a competitive edge in the job market  
Communication skills will contribute to your company's and your own success

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## New Hires @ Work

### Ryan Croy

University of Tennessee

Content Writer @ Asurion

I've built credibility in two ways: intelligent communication and dependability. The way you ask for something is just as important as what you're asking for. When I request a favor, I offer something in return. Even if there isn't much I can do for that person, he will remember (and appreciate!) the gesture. It's also important to be reliable. If somebody asks you to do something, do it—and get it back to her before the deadline. You earn more responsibility as you build a dependable reputation.



Photo courtesy of Ryan Croy

# Chapter 1 | Introduction

What do employers look for in people they hire to be future leaders? Clearly, employers are looking for *competence*—your ability or potential to do the job you are hired to do. They are also looking for *credibility*. In other words, they want employees who have good character and real substance, who are trustworthy, and who will represent the organization well. Just as importantly, they are looking for *confidence*. That doesn't mean that they admire arrogance. Instead, it means they want employees and leaders who have an attitude and style of communication that inspires confidence in others.

These three elements—competence, credibility, and confidence—form the core of **professional presence**.<sup>1</sup> Some people equate presence with the “wow” factor that allows you to make a great first impression, similar to the peacock that is the emblem of this book.<sup>2</sup> While that wow factor is certainly impressive, presence goes deeper than that. Presence emanates from within, reflecting your comfort with yourself and the rapport you develop with people around you. In addition, your professional presence depends on your ability to communicate so that others recognize your competence, are eager to listen to what you have to say, trust you, and have confidence in you.

How do you develop presence? While you are in school, you have undoubtedly been developing your

*competence* as you take courses in your major and other fields. Ideally, you have also been learning how to learn, so that you can continue to increase your competence on the job. Your *credibility* is based in part on your character, which you have been developing since you were a child. You also earn credibility by doing good work, being trustworthy, and empathizing with others, showing that you understand their needs and point of view. You develop *confidence* by believing in yourself and by learning communication skills that allow you to project that belief as you communicate your ideas. Confidence also comes from the knowledge that you can use your critical thinking abilities to adapt what you have learned as new situations arise.

This book and this course are designed to help you polish your professional presence by developing the communication competencies that will set you apart from others, no matter what career you pursue. Communication is what makes presence possible. Think of this first chapter as a preview of the book. It will help you understand why communication is challenging, what benefits you will receive by learning to communicate well, and what characteristics you should be able to demonstrate when you complete this course.

## **SQ1** Why is it challenging to communicate well?

**professional presence** Your ability to project competence, credibility, and confidence in your communication.

**communication** The process by which participants not only exchange messages (information, ideas, and feelings) but also co-create and share meaning.

Professional presence depends on communicating well, and that is not an easy task. Even in its most basic form, **communication** is a complex process of encoding and decoding messages (information, ideas, and feelings). However, as communication theory has developed, our understanding of communication has evolved. Communication is more than just the exchange of messages. It is the process by which people co-create and share meaning. Success in communication is affected by an array of factors that go beyond the language you use, including the physical, social, and cultural context in which you communicate; your relationship with your audience; and the audience's knowledge and expectations. The following sections provide more insight into why communication is so challenging.

## Communication is a complex process

Early models of the communication process began to uncover some of the complexities of communication. The *transmission model* focused on a single communication exchange and portrayed communication as the linear transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver.<sup>3</sup> A sender has an intention; selects a **medium** of communication; **encodes** that intention into words, images, or actions; and sends the message through that medium. The receiver gets that message and **decodes** it to understand its meaning, unless the message is blocked by some kind of noise or barrier.

The concept of **barriers** helps explain why communication often fails. Barriers come in many forms. They may be *physiological*. For example, if you are speaking to someone who has hearing loss or a migraine headache, he may not be able to listen effectively and interpret what you are saying. Barriers may be *psychological*. If you compliment someone who does not trust you, she may interpret that compliment as a subtle criticism. *Semantic barriers* arise from language that is ambiguous or difficult to understand. If a colleague rushes late into a meeting and says to you, “I was held up at the train station,” you might ask if the robber had a gun, when your colleague simply meant that the train was delayed. *Language barriers* arise from senders and receivers not using a shared language. Sometimes the problem is obvious: The sender speaks only Spanish and the receiver speaks only English. Sometimes the problem is less obvious. For example, employees who are new to a company or industry may not yet understand the jargon people use.

Despite its contributions to communication theory, the transmission model does not provide a rich enough view of communication. For example, it does not take into account the iterative back-and-forth process that communicators use to ensure understanding. Receivers become senders as they provide verbal and nonverbal **feedback**. Messages and meanings evolve in this back-and-forth exchange. Nor does the model account for the various contexts that affect a sender’s encoding choices and a receiver’s decoding process.

## Communication is affected by context

Later models of communication address the complexities of feedback and context. For example, the *interaction model* of communication portrays communication as a dynamic process.<sup>4</sup> Messages evolve as senders and receivers communicate in turn and give each other feedback. The interaction model also introduced the concept of **context**—the external circumstances and forces that influence communication. This model considers the *physical context* in which communication takes place, including the physical distance between communicators as well as what’s going on around you. For example, shouting across a noisy room is different from whispering in someone’s ear. The model also considers *psychological context*: what’s going on in the communicators’ minds. Someone who fears losing a job may interpret a boss’s comment differently than someone who feels secure.

The *transaction model* of communication expands on the concept of context and recognizes that communication is influenced by a broader set of external forces: social, relational, and cultural.<sup>5</sup> *Social context* refers to the set of learned behaviors and norms that guide communication choices. In some social contexts (such as a classroom), you may wait to be acknowledged before speaking. In other social contexts, you will talk more freely and may even interrupt someone else. *Relational context* arises from past history and current relationships with your audience. For example, if you have had a difficult relationship with someone, you may choose to email that person rather than talk face to face. *Cultural context* acknowledges that one group’s set of learned behaviors and norms may be different from another’s. For example, if you come from a culture that is comfortable being direct and straightforward, you may have difficulty communicating in a culture where people imply negative messages rather than communicate them directly.

## Communication is more than transmission of messages

The transactional model of communication also offers a different view of why people communicate. People communicate for an array of reasons other than just to transmit or clarify messages—for example, to form and maintain relationships, to persuade others, to learn, to increase self-esteem, to develop new ideas, and to work collaboratively. Communication is

**medium** The method you use to deliver your message (for example, telephone, face-to-face meeting, email, text message, or website).

**encode** To translate the meaning of a message into words, images, or actions.

**decode** To interpret the words, images, and actions of a message and attach meaning to them.

**barrier** An obstacle that gets in the way of effective communication.

**feedback** Any form of verbal or nonverbal response to a message.

**context** The external circumstances and forces that influence communication.

more than an exchange of information. It is the means by which we influence the world and create meaning.

The communication model illustrated in **Figure 1.1** builds on past models, incorporating the range of complexities recognized today. In a business communication class, you will learn to account for all of these complexities as you make and implement your communication decisions.

FIGURE 1.1 Model of Communication Process



## SQ2 What are the benefits of being a good communicator?

As the previous section described, being an effective communicator is challenging. Not everyone is good at it. If you take advantage of this course to become a better communicator, you will benefit in several ways. In addition to enhancing your professional presence, you will also develop skills that will give you a competitive edge in the job market, contribute to your company's success, and contribute to your personal success.

### Effective business communicators have a competitive edge in the job market

Employers want to hire good communicators. Surveys and interviews of corporate recruiters make this very clear. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) routinely surveys employers to determine the skills and qualities that employers most value in employees. In a recent survey, employers rated the following communication-related skills as more important than technical knowledge:<sup>6</sup>

- Ability to work in a team structure
- Ability to verbally communicate with people both inside and outside the organization
- Ability to obtain and process information

Communication also dominates the list of the “Skills Companies Demand in New Graduate Business School Hires,” compiled by the Graduate Management Admissions Council. Of the 25 skills ranked in order of importance by the survey's respondents, the top rated were oral communication, listening skills, written communication, and presentation skills.<sup>7</sup> Recruiters interviewed at a university career fair made a similar point. They wanted to recruit people with “communication and writing skills,” as well as “more polish, confidence, and passion,” which are elements of nonverbal communication and professional presence.<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, although these communication skills are widely considered important, few people in the workplace have mastered them well enough to meet employers' needs. A report produced collaboratively by American Express and Millennial Branding found that “managers have an overall negative view of young workers, and point to their lack of soft skills regarding

communication and interpersonal interactions, time management abilities and willingness to work as a team.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the New Graduates’ Workforce Readiness study found that many employers were dissatisfied with the communication skills of their college-graduate employees, specifically citing deficiencies in written communication, leadership, professionalism, and creativity.<sup>10</sup> Business blogger Jon Felperin goes so far as to call the current situation a “writing skills deficit.”<sup>11</sup> Many applicants themselves are aware of this problem; a recent survey by Lee Hecht Harrison found that 24 percent of job seekers believed their writing skills needed improvement for success on the job market—again, more than any other skill.<sup>12</sup>

When employees come to the job with insufficient communication skills, employers need to provide on-the-job training—and that costs time and money. A recent study conducted by the American Management Association found that of the 721 senior-level professionals interviewed, 66 percent said they invested company resources in training their employees in communication skills—more than any other kind of professional activity.<sup>13</sup>

This bad news for the workforce may be good news for you. It means you have an opportunity to stand out in the crowd. If you are able to apply the range of skills you learn in this course, you will be a valuable asset to your business, which will increase your professional success and perhaps even your income. You will also be able to use these skills to be more effective in your personal life.

## Communication skills will contribute to your company’s and your own success

Because communication is a valued commodity in the workplace, it can enhance your professional and personal success in a variety of ways.

### Communication skills will make you a more valuable employee

Companies want good communicators because good communication is profitable: it *saves* money and it *makes* money. Consider the following ways in which better communication skills can increase your value to your company:

- **Writing.** Clear, effective writing can save organizations hundreds of thousands of dollars, while ineffective communication can cost time and money. For example, Federal Express improved the readability of a ground-operations manual, making it so much easier for employees to read that the company saved an estimated \$400,000 in the first year due to increased efficiency.<sup>14</sup>

In the public sector, the state of Washington found it was losing tax revenue because businesses did not clearly understand an important letter explaining the requirements about a specific type of tax. After the state simplified the letter, the improved communication led to an additional \$800,000 of tax revenue being collected.<sup>15</sup>

If you have good writing skills and good critical thinking ability, you can contribute to this kind of cost savings and impress your employer.

- **Listening and speaking.** Writing is not the only communication skill that makes you a more valuable employee. As a salesperson, you can bring in more sales if you know how to listen effectively to customers’ needs, demonstrate how a product or service meets those needs, and close the sale at the end of a conversation. As a customer service representative, you can retain customers and attract new ones by answering their questions efficiently and communicating solutions to their problems. As a team member who collaborates well with other team members to solve problems, you may be able to bring a product to market earlier, increasing the opportunity to sell the product.
- **Developing communication strategy.** If you work at a managerial or executive level, you may have the opportunity to influence how your organization communicates with employees, investors, and the general public. That communication can directly impact the organization’s success. Research by a global consulting firm found that companies that are highly effective at communicating also experience greater employee satisfaction and productivity as well as greater confidence by investors. As a result, these companies financially outperform their peers more often than companies that communicate less effectively.<sup>16</sup>
- **Implementing social media.** Your expertise with **social media** also can benefit your company. Effective communication through social media—such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter—improves

**social media** Web-based applications, such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, designed to promote social interaction.



employee satisfaction and builds brand awareness to reach more customers.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, if you run your own small business as an entrepreneur, your communication abilities will be especially critical because you will be responsible for most, if not all, of your company's social media communication.<sup>18</sup>

## Communication skills may improve your salary

Employers who recognize the value of communication skills may pay a premium to get employees with those skills. Kip Tindell, the CEO of the Container Store, explains that communication is at the heart of his company's success, and he is willing to pay double the industry average for a great employee who has the right skills. Tindell said, "one great person could easily be as productive as three good people," so paying twice as much is a bargain.<sup>19</sup>

## Good communication skills can improve your personal life

If you learn good business communication skills—such as speaking and writing clearly, being aware of who will receive your message, listening to others, and persuading others—you can apply those skills in your personal life to improve your relationships with friends and family. In addition, you may be able to use your communication skills to persuade your cell phone provider to give you a refund or negotiate a better deal on a car. These benefits confirm that studying business communication and practicing your skills will generate a positive return on your investment of time and energy, both for your professional career and your personal life.

## SQ3 What characteristics will help you communicate effectively?

### New Hires @ Work

#### Shruti Shah

University of Florida

Operations Analyst Development Program Intern @ JPMorgan Chase

I was surprised how broad but significant being a good communicator is. It does not just involve giving powerful presentations; it also involves asking the right questions, carrying conversations with coworkers and managers, and contributing during meetings.

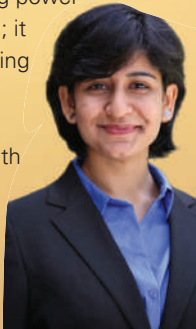


Photo courtesy of Shruti Shah

**communication strategy** A plan for what and how you are going to communicate to ensure your message achieves your purpose.

**purpose** The reason why you are communicating.

**outcome** The result of your communication; what you want the recipients of your message to know, do, or feel about the subject of your message.

As you begin to polish your professional presence, consider your current skills and abilities. Think about your core abilities: writing, speaking, and interpersonal communication. The best business communicators—those who have real presence, are able to connect with other people, and successfully deal with communication challenges—share the specific characteristics illustrated in **Figure 1.2**. These are the characteristics that make writing, speaking, and other interactions effective. The remainder of this chapter previews these characteristics, which you will continue to develop throughout the course and throughout your career. As you read about them, perform a quick self-assessment: What are your current strengths, and what gaps do you need to fill to become a more effective communicator?

## Being strategic

The best communicators always have a **communication strategy**—a plan for what and how to communicate to ensure that their message achieves its **purpose**. Strategic communicators are always making decisions, asking themselves these questions:

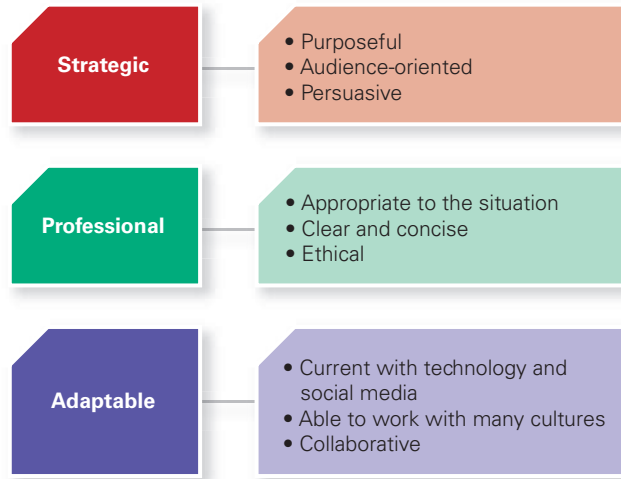
- What do I want to accomplish with this communication? What is my goal?
- Who is my audience? With whom should I communicate to accomplish my goal?
- What content will my audience need?
- What medium will work best: a face-to-face meeting, teleconference, email, presentation, report—or a combination of medium options?
- How can I frame and organize the message to state the main point and effectively support it?

As these questions suggest, to be a strategic communicator, you must be purposeful, audience-oriented, and—in many cases—persuasive.

## Purposeful

Business communication involves more than self-expression. It needs to be purposeful and constructed to achieve an intended **outcome**. You can judge the effectiveness of your communication by whether it accomplishes its purpose. For example, when you write a cover letter for a job, the letter is effective if you get an interview. Other features of effective communication—such as grammatical correctness, clarity, and conciseness—will also help you achieve your purpose.

**Effective business communicators are . . .**



**FIGURE 1.2** Characteristics of Effective Business Communicators

Consider the two versions of the email message in **Figure 1.3** by Zack Kramer, a business major and a member of his university’s chapter of Students for a Cleaner Environment. The two emails appear to have similar purposes: to get information from a civil engineering professor for one of the club’s projects. However, only one of them is likely to get Zack what he wants. (You will learn more about being purposeful in Chapter 3: Managing the Communication Process.)

**FIGURE 1.3** How to Write a Purposeful Email

**MyBCommLab** Apply  
 Figure 1.3’s key concepts by going to [mybcommmlab.com](http://mybcommmlab.com)

**INEFFECTIVE**

To: civilingineering@portola.edu  
 Subject: fluid dynamics

Hello. My name is Zack Kramer. I’m on a student team working on a screening system that keeps sand out of a river intake (the Concord River, to be exact). Our current problem now is that the water looks like chocolate because it is so sandy, and because of that, the sand build-up at the bottom of the river seeps through the holes of the deep intake, creating a mess inside the intake because of the cementing, problems with filtrations, and obviously unclean water. On behalf of our team, we are looking for somebody in the civil engineering department with some experience in that area who can enlighten us with some past ideas used in other rivers, or perhaps recommend some of his/her own ideas and/or literature. Could you please forward this email to the professors in your department so that we can get some help?

Thanks  
 Zack

**EFFECTIVE**

To: jonsmith@portola.edu  
 Subject: Request for Help in Fluid Dynamics

Dear Professor Smith:

Professor Jones, the faculty advisor for Students for a Cleaner Environment, suggested that our design team contact you because you are an expert in fluid dynamics. Our club is currently designing a screening system for an intake valve on the Concord River, and your work on particles in rivers relates to our project. I know that our group would benefit tremendously from your expertise.

Would you be willing to meet with a few members of our team for about 15 minutes later this week to speak with us about the flow patterns of suspended particles in river water? If you are willing to meet with us, please let us know when would be a good time for you.

If you are not available, could you recommend someone else in your department who may be able to help us?

We would be very grateful for any thoughts you might have on our project. Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you,  
 Zack Kramer  
 zack.kramer@portola.edu

**Callouts:**

- Avoid broad, untargeted email addresses and vague subject lines.
- Avoid long paragraphs that force the reader to hunt for your point.
- Avoid unclear questions that require extra steps—here, asking the recipient to forward your email on to someone else.
- Address the email to a specific person rather than an entire department to ensure a response. Use a formal salutation (“Dear Professor Smith”) when writing to someone for the first time.
- Use a clear, specific subject line to alert the reader to the email’s purpose.
- Get to the point quickly to show respect for your reader’s time, and keep sentences relatively short.
- Ask a very specific question that is easy for the receiver to answer. Position the question in a visible location, at the beginning of a paragraph.