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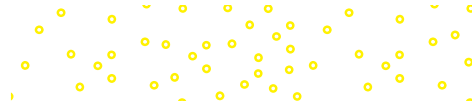
Business Communication

Developing Leaders for a Networked World



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Peter W. Cardon



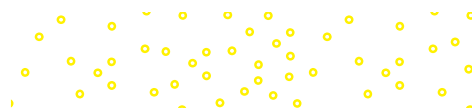
Business Communication

Developing Leaders for a Networked World

Fourth Edition

Peter W. Cardon

University of Southern California





BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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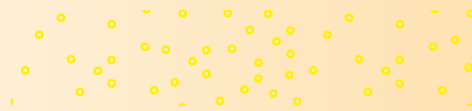
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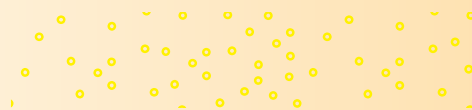
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Dedication

To my daughters: Camilla Jean and Audrey Mei. Your mom and I love spending every day with you. You make me the happiest dad in the world!

—Peter W. Cardon



About the Author



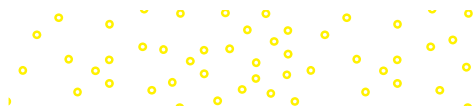
Courtesy of Peter Cardon

Peter W. Cardon, MBA, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Business Communication at the University of Southern California. He also serves as Academic Director for the MBA for Professionals and Managers program. He teaches a variety of courses in the MBA and undergraduate business programs, including management communication, intercultural communication, and new media and communication. With approximately 75 refereed articles, Pete is an active contributor to the latest research in intercultural communication, social networking, team collaboration, and leadership communication. He is proud to engage in a discipline that helps so many business professionals and students reach career and personal goals.

Pete is an active member of the Association for Business Communication (ABC), for which he previously served as president. He currently serves as an Editorial Review Board member for the *International Journal of Business Communication (IJBC)* and *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly (BPCQ)*.

Prior to joining higher education, Pete worked as a marketing director at an international tourism company that focused on the markets of Brazil, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. Before that position, he was an account manager in a manufacturing company.

Pete is a strong advocate of global business ties. Having worked in China for three years and consulted in and traveled to roughly 70 countries, he has worked extensively with clients, customers, colleagues, and other partners across the world. To help students develop global leadership skills, he has led student groups on company tours and humanitarian projects to mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, South Korea, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. He is an active member of Rotary International, a global service organization committed to promoting peace, fighting disease, providing educational opportunities, and growing local economies.



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Bonus Content  **create**[®]  **connect**[®]

Available only at www.mcgrawhillcreate.com/cardon or in the e-book within McGraw-Hill Connect[®].

Bonus Chapter Crisis Communications and Public Relations Messages BC-1

Bonus Appendix Creating Proposals and Business Plans BA-1

Developing Leaders for a Networked World



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Welcome to the fourth edition of *Business Communication: Developing Leaders for a Networked World*. Taking Peter Cardon's **practitioner and case-based approach**, this text helps students develop an understanding of how course content applies to the business world. Maintaining a central theme of **credibility**, the fourth edition communicates why **credibility** is essential to effective communication in today's rapidly changing business environment. Cardon's text, integrated with *Connect for Business Communication*, provides a contemporary yet traditional view into the business communication field, empowering students to learn bedrock communication principles while also staying up to date with cultural and **technological** changes in the business world—transforming them into leaders for a networked world.

Credibility

Since professional success often depends on engendering trust within professional relationships, this text begins with a discussion of credibility and refers to it throughout. Principles of relationship-building such as personal credibility, emotional intelligence, and listening hold a prominent role throughout the text.

Effective Writing Builds Relationships

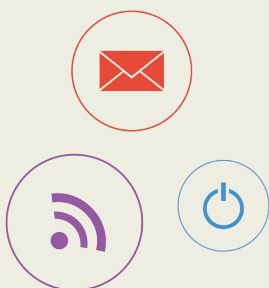
Effective writing in the workplace is essential to building connections and a professional brand. Cardon's three-stage writing process drives excellence in critical thinking, collaboration, and productivity in work relationships. With additional examples of internal messages, Cardon develops the skills used early in a career.

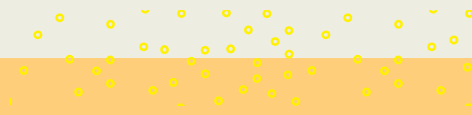
Enhanced Coverage of Technology

This text adopts a visionary view of communication technologies. Cardon's text takes a view of social media use that includes team communication and communication with external partners. The need for students to develop an online professional persona that builds credibility is also addressed. This prepares students for communication in the evolving workplace.

Business Focus

The case-based approach helps students learn how communication can build rich and productive relationships between professionals. Each chapter opens with a short business case, and weaves examples from the case throughout the chapter and into the model documents, engaging readers in the story behind each business message.





Forward-Looking Vision Built on Tradition

While the text stays true to core business communication principles established over many decades, it also goes beyond traditional coverage with inclusion of the latest communication practices facilitated by communication technologies and its enhanced coverage of increasingly important business communication topics such as:

Interpersonal communication (Chapters 2, 3, and 4), social media and technology (Chapters 7 and 8), crisis communication and public relations (Bonus Chapter), oral communication (throughout the text), and business plans and business proposals (Bonus Appendix).

Why Does This Matter?

Each chapter begins with a section that explains why the content is crucial to career success. A URL located at the beginning of these sections direct students to view a short video clip of the author reinforcing this message.

Chapter Takeaways

With graphics and lists, the chapter takeaways engage students with key chapter content, and serve as a reference for applying the principles to their oral and written communication.

Learning Exercises

Each chapter contains engaging learning exercises. These exercises are organized into discussion exercises, evaluation exercises, application exercises, and language and mechanics checks to help students develop expertise in business communication.





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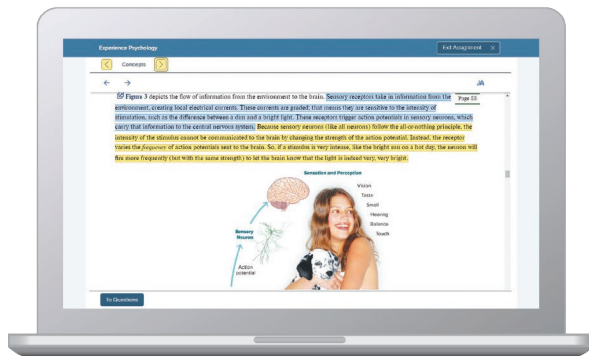
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Grammar and Mechanics

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Put responsible writing into practice. LearnSmart Achieve develops and improves editing and business writing skills. This adaptive learning system helps students learn faster, study more efficiently, and retain more knowledge for greater success. Visit bit.ly/meetLSAchieve for a walkthrough.

Grammar Quizzes

Students may not think grammar and mechanics are the most exciting topics, but they need to master the basics. Our grammar quizzes within Connect assess students' grammar and mechanics. With a total of 150 auto-graded questions, these are great to use as pre- and post-tests in your courses.

Application

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Educators know that the more students can see, hear, and experience class resources, the better they learn. In fact, studies prove it. Tegrity's unique search feature helps students efficiently find what they need, when they need it, across an entire semester of class recordings. Help turn your students' study time into learning moments immediately supported by your lecture. With Tegrity, you also increase intent listening and class participation by easing students' concerns about note-taking. Using Tegrity in Connect will make it more likely you will see students' faces, not the tops of their heads.

Test Builder in Connect

Available within Connect, Test Builder is a cloud-based tool that enables instructors to format tests that can be printed or administered within an LMS. Test Builder offers a modern, streamlined interface for easy content configuration that matches course needs, without requiring a download.

Test Builder allows you to:

- access all test bank content from a particular title.
- easily pinpoint the most relevant content through robust filtering options.
- manipulate the order of questions or scramble questions and/or answers.
- pin questions to a specific location within a test.
- determine your preferred treatment of algorithmic questions.
- choose the layout and spacing.
- add instructions and configure default settings.

Test Builder provides a secure interface for better protection of content and allows for just-in-time updates to flow directly into assessments.

Exercises

Each chapter contains exercises that allow students to:

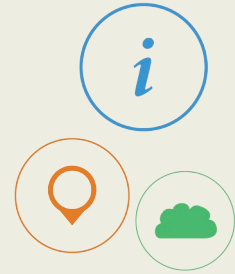
- apply concepts to real-world video cases.
- analyze a case and apply chapter concepts.
- quiz knowledge on grammar and usage.
- demonstrate problem-solving skills through complex examples and diagrams.
- assess students' values, skills, and interests via self-assessments.
- demonstrate knowledge about business models and processes.

Students receive immediate feedback and can track their progress in their own report. Detailed results let instructors see at a glance how each student performs and easily track the progress of every student in their course.

Keeping Up with What's New

The fourth edition of *Business Communication: Developing Leaders for a Networked World* continues to provide results-driven, technology-focused, case-based, and forward-looking content to help business students develop professional credibility for the workplace of tomorrow.

In an increasingly networked world, students will need better interpersonal skills than ever before; they will need better team skills than ever before; they will need better writing skills, especially adapted to new technologies; and they will need stronger presentation skills. This fourth edition contains the following changes to help students succeed:



Chapter 1 (Credibility)

- A new tech tip about developing credibility on LinkedIn.
- A new feature, called Ideas in Action, which appears in each chapter, highlighting a business leader's views on credibility.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 (Interpersonal, Team, and Global Communication)

- New content about perspective getting and responding to gossip and complaining.
- New content about groupthink.
- Updated information about global etiquette.
- New tech tips and Ideas in Action features.

Chapters 5 and 6 (The Writing Process)

- Half the examples are new and the other half are updated.
- New tech tips and Ideas in Action features.

Chapters 7 and 8 (Technology and Communication)

- Additional content about team messaging.
- Half the examples are new and the other half are updated.
- New tech tips and Ideas in Action features.

Chapters 9, 10, and 11 (Business Messages: Routine, Persuasive, and Bad-News Messages)

- Half the examples are new and the other half are updated.
- Additional exercises are added at the end of each chapter.
- New tech tips and Ideas in Action features.

Chapters 12 and 13 (Business Reports and Proposals)

- Half the examples are new and the other half are updated.
- Additional exercises are added at the end of each chapter.
- New tech tips and Ideas in Action features.

Chapters 14 and 15 (Presentations)

- Half the examples are new and the other half are updated.
- Additional exercises are added at the end of each chapter.
- New tech tips and Ideas in Action features.

Chapter 16 (Employment Communication)

- A new section on professional networking has been added.
- Examples of résumés are updated.
- Additional exercises are added at the end of the chapter.
- New tech tips and Ideas in Action feature.



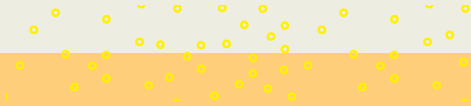
Appreciation

Thank you to all the reviewers and other business communication instructors who gave advice for the fourth edition. I've made dozens of changes and updates to meet the needs of today's business students based on the recommendations of these reviewers and advisory board members. Each of these instructors is at the forefront of best practices in business communication. Again, I express my appreciation for their advice and time to help improve this learning program. A special thank you to Jennifer Loney and Suzanne Buck for their ongoing support.

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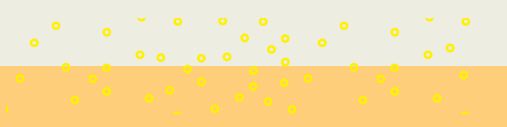


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I extend my deepest thanks to the many business leaders and professionals, business communication scholars and instructors, and colleagues and friends who have contributed their valuable ideas. I especially appreciate the efforts of reviewers and other colleagues who reviewed iterations of the previous editions of this product. With each round of reviews, reviewers provided excellent and influential feedback to improve and refine the content. Thank you to each of the following experts in the business communication field who have contributed to the development of this learning program!

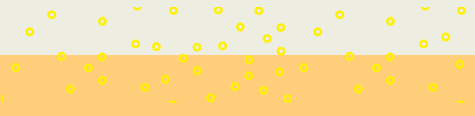
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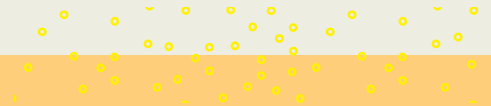
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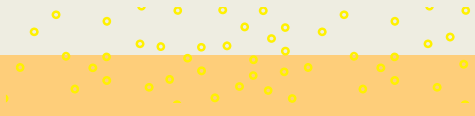


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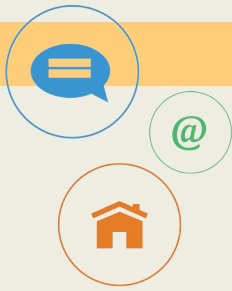


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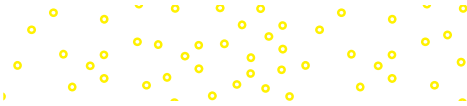
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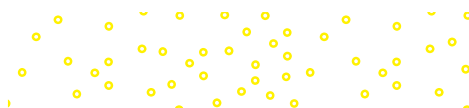
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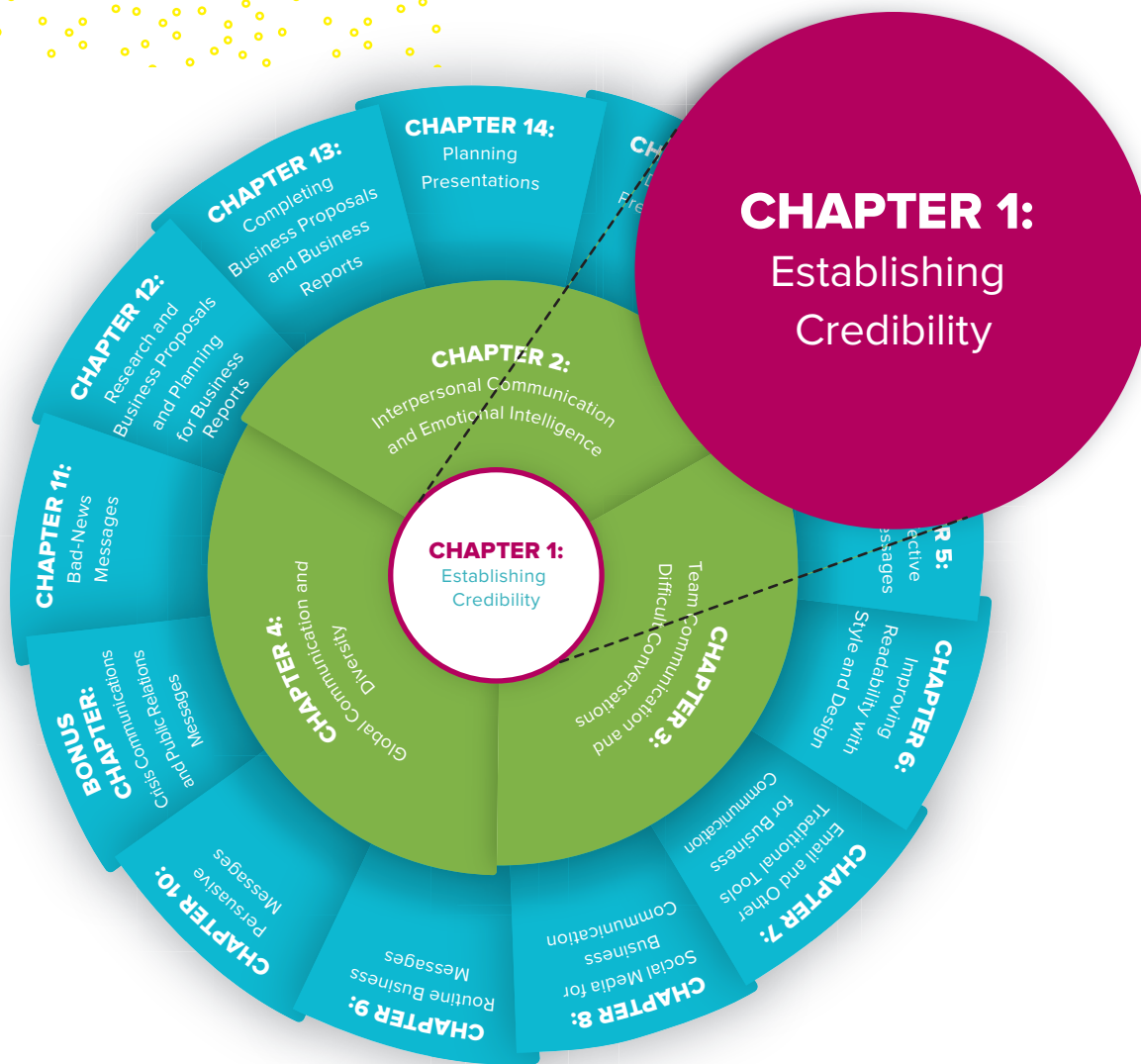
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Introduction to Business Communication

Chapter 1 — Establishing Credibility



ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY



PRINCIPLES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION



PRINCIPLES FOR & TYPES OF BUSINESS MESSAGES



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- LO1.1** Explain the importance of establishing credibility for business communications.
- LO1.2** Describe how competence, caring, and character affect your credibility as a communicator.

- LO1.3** Define and explain business ethics, corporate values, and personal values.
- LO1.4** Explain the FAIR approach to ethical business communications.



WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

In most business situations, others make judgments about what you say, write, and do based on your credibility. **Credibility** is your reputation for being trustworthy—trustworthy to perform your work with excellence; to care about those you work with and for; to live by high ethical, corporate, and personal values; and to deliver on your promises. In short, your credibility is the degree to which others believe or trust in you. In this book, we often use the terms *trust* and *credibility* interchangeably.

Business communications occur in the context of working relationships, all of which depend on trust.¹ Credibility has always been important to business relationships, yet its importance has grown in recent years with an increasingly interdependent, knowledge-based workplace.² As one of the foremost thinkers on trust in the workplace, Stephen M. R. Covey made this observation:

Contrary to what most people believe, trust is not some soft, illusive quality that you either have or you don't; rather, trust is a pragmatic, tangible, actionable asset that you can create—much faster than you probably think possible. . . . It is the key leadership competency of the new global economy.³

In this chapter, we discuss the ways that business executives and the business community establish trust. Then, we focus on three components of credibility: competence, caring, and character.⁴ First, however, you will read a short scenario about choosing a mentor. Each potential mentor has credibility but for different reasons.

Hear Pete Cardon explain why this matters.

bit.ly/cardon1

LO1.1 Explain the importance of establishing credibility for business communications.

CHAPTER CASE WHOM DO YOU TRUST AS YOUR MENTOR?



WHO'S INVOLVED

Luis



Sally



Tom



THE SITUATION

Assume you were hired about a month ago. Your company has a practice of assigning a mentor to new employees during their first six months. You've been told that mentors can have a major impact on your opportunities: your team assignments, your projects, and your overall career development. You've gotten to know some of your new colleagues, and your boss has asked you which one you would like to be your mentor. Read through your impressions of your colleagues below, and consider who would make the best mentor for you.

(Luis character): Siri Stafford/Getty Images; (Sally character): Xi Xin Xing/Getty Images;
(Tom character): Sam Edwards/AGE Fotostock

LUIS

Luis has worked at your company for one year. Everyone enjoys working with him. He is always cheerful and happy to see those around him. He consistently finds out what his colleagues need and goes out of his way to help out. Everyone thinks Luis is fun. He likes to go out for a drink after work and gets everyone laughing. Luis is well known for being well connected within your company. One thing that every colleague says about him is that he's honest. He continues to make some rookie mistakes, however, and he has done sloppy work several times when he was up against tight deadlines.

SALLY

Sally has worked at your company for three years. She has a reputation of being a star performer. In fact, she's generally assigned the most important projects for that reason. Colleagues know that when she promises something, she makes it happen. A lot of colleagues think she's excessively critical of others when they fall short of her expectations. A colleague complained to one of the managers, "Sally never gives me a chance to develop my skills. She just takes over the project."

TOM

Tom has worked at your company for four years. He consistently receives excellent ratings on his quarterly performance reviews. He is intensely loyal to his team members, and he does everything he can to make sure they succeed. Recently, one of his team members lost a client because she missed several deadlines. When Tom's boss asked why they lost the client, Tom protected his teammate by saying that the client preferred the services of a competitor.

TASK

Luis, Sally, and Tom are like most people—they have some strengths and some weaknesses. As you read this chapter, you will find that each of them lacks complete credibility but for different reasons. Now, choose your mentor. Whom do you trust to help you succeed in your new position?

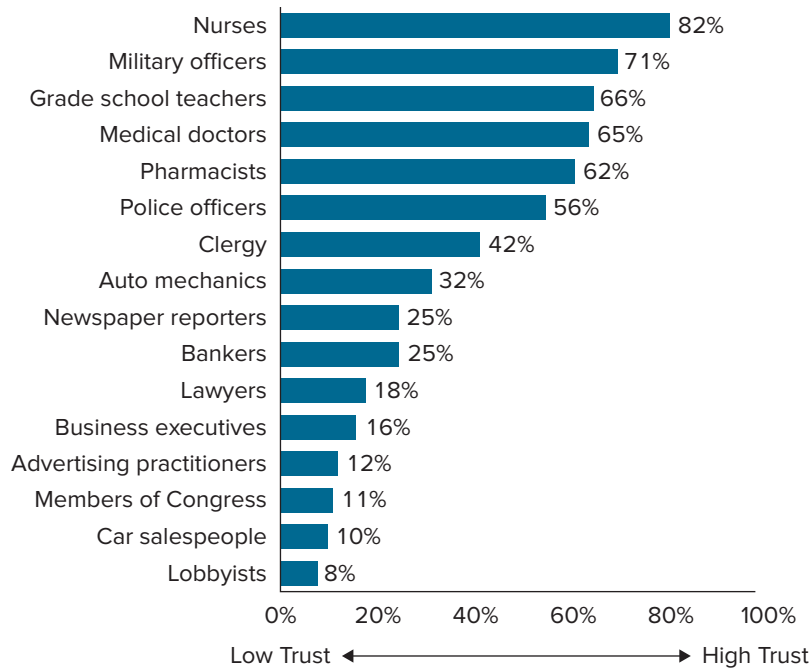
The Role of Trust in the Post-Trust Era

Do you operate from a position of trust or credibility? That is one of the first things you should consider as you communicate. In the business world, you often start from a deficit of trust. As a result, one of your first goals should be to gain trust or credibility from colleagues, clients, customers, and other contacts.⁵

Given the major business scandals and high-profile misdeeds in recent years (i.e., Enron, Volkswagen, United Airlines, Wells Fargo), trust in businesses and business executives has dropped to all-time lows. As depicted in Figure 1.1, the trust extended by the general public to business executives is far lower than the trust extended to members of other selected professions.⁶

The public also increasingly views companies and other institutions with less trust. One of the most well-known and publicized trust indexes is developed by Edelman, a prominent communications firm. Edelman experts measure trust in institutions, including business, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), government, and media in 28 countries. In 2018, public trust in institutions dropped more in the United States than in any other country. Historically, United States was labeled a "trust" country but is now labeled a "distrust" country.⁷

A deficit of trust also exists within companies. In a global study of nearly 10,000 full-time employees, just 49 percent said they trusted their bosses and those working with them.⁸ Furthermore, approximately 76 percent of employees have seen illegal or

**FIGURE 1.1**

How Will You Overcome Public Perceptions to Build Credibility?

A Look at Trust in Various Professions

Source: Gallup, Inc.

Note: Based on the percentage of American adults who considered members of these occupations "very high" or "high" in honesty and ethical standards in a November 2017 Gallup poll. Available at news.gallup.com/poll/224639/nurses-keep-healthy-lead-honest-ethical-profession.aspx.

unethical conduct in the past 12 months at their jobs.⁹ As future business managers and leaders, you will often find yourself in charge of employees who are accustomed to not trusting those in leadership positions.

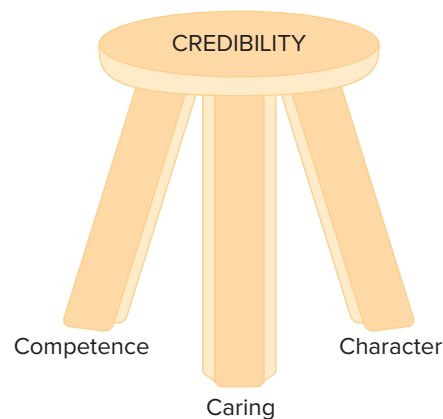
A strong predictor of cheating in the workplace is cheating in school. Sadly, recent research has found that cheating is so pervasive that some use the label a *global cheating culture*. Among high school students, 80 percent of high-performing students admit to having cheated, and 50 percent do not believe cheating is wrong. Other research about high school students found that more than 70 percent had engaged in serious cheating, and 50 percent had plagiarized assignments from the Internet. In a study of more than 50,000 undergraduate students in the United States, more than 70 percent admitted to serious cheating. Nearly 80 percent stated that Internet plagiarism was not a serious offense.¹⁰

Perhaps most concerning is that business students are among the worst offenders. When asked in anonymous surveys if they had cheated to get into graduate school, many students admitted to having done so: 43 percent of liberal arts students, 52 percent of education students, 63 percent of medical students, 63 percent of law students, and 75 percent of business students. Think about that! Three-quarters of graduate-level business students admitted to some form of cheating to get into their programs. In another study involving hypothetical ethical dilemmas, convicts in minimum-security prisons scored as high on unethical behavior as MBA students.¹¹ In yet another study of 6,226 undergraduate business students in 36 countries, American business students viewed cheating no differently than did students from countries considered high in corruption.¹²

Michael Maslansky, a leading corporate communications expert, and his colleagues have labeled this the post-trust era. In the **post-trust era**, the public overwhelmingly views businesses as operating against the public's best interests, and the majority of employees view their leaders and colleagues skeptically. Regarding the post-trust era, Maslansky and his colleagues said, "Just a few years ago, salespeople, corporate leaders, marketing departments, and communicators like me had it pretty easy. We looked at communication as a relatively linear process. . . . But trust disappeared, things changed."¹³

FIGURE 1.2

The Three Components of Credibility



Most of these perceptions about business leaders as untrustworthy are not necessarily fair. Daniel Janssen, former chairman of the board of directors of Solvay (a Belgian chemicals company operating in more than 50 countries), explained the dilemma:

Executives of large companies today are generally perceived as efficient and competent, but also self-interested and ungenerous. However, I think that people who form this opinion are underestimating something of which they lack knowledge. Many executives, in top management and also at other levels, are incredibly generous and not at all self-interested. They do their job and they do it with respect for the common interest. But it is true that capitalism is too often marked by its dark and greedy side.¹⁴

You will often find yourself needing to establish credibility in this post-trust era. As a future manager and executive, you can control your reputation as a credible communicator by focusing on three well-established factors: competence, caring, and character. Research has shown that these three factors almost entirely account for whether a person is considered credible in professional situations. As depicted in Figure 1.2, credibility is like a three-legged stool. Without any one element, it is compromised.

The Role of Competence in Establishing Credibility

LO1.2 Describe how competence, caring, and character affect your credibility as a communicator.



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Visit <http://connect.mheducation.com> for an exercise on this topic.

Competence refers to the knowledge and skills needed to accomplish business tasks, approach business problems, and get a job done. Most people will judge your competence based on your track record of success and achievement.

In her memoir, Meg Whitman, former CEO of HP and eBay, explains how as a young professional she gained credibility and displayed competence within her organization: “I just focused on delivering results,” she said. “You have to excel at the tasks you’re given and you have to add value to every single project, every conversation where someone seeks your input.”¹⁵

People develop competence in many ways: through study, observation, and, most important, practice and real-world work experiences. Your entire business program is likely centered on developing competence in a certain business discipline and/or industry. You may already have significant business experience. If you’re a novice, seeking internships and jobs related to your discipline will help you develop competence.

How you communicate directly affects the perceptions others have of your competence. Throughout this book, you will find an emphasis on two traits associated with competence: a focus on action and an emphasis on results.

A *focus on action* implies that you seize business opportunities. Meg Whitman emphasized this action-oriented approach to work: “The way I usually put it is, the price of inaction is far greater than the cost of making a mistake. You do not have to be perfect to be an effective leader, but you cannot be timid.”¹⁶ She also described an *emphasis on results*:

I don’t believe that all a company needs to do is declare that it has values and then say, “Trust us, we know what’s best.” To be a success, you must identify a goal with a measurable outcome, and you must hit that goal—every day, every month, every year. Trying is important. But trying is not the same as achieving success. . . . [Some] people expect to advance in their careers regardless of results and are surprised when it doesn’t happen. They feel entitled. Their attitude is: “Because I’m here, because I’m me, you owe me.”¹⁷

In the opening scenario in which you chose a mentor, Luis is weakest in competence. While he is strong at caring for others and displaying good character, many people will question his ability to accomplish tasks well. He has less experience than his colleagues and sometimes performs sloppy work. Yet, many people would choose him as their mentor because they trust his ability to find out about their career needs and trust he knows how to connect them to others in the company.

In summary, you demonstrate competence by taking an active role in your business and by getting results. How you communicate your plan of action and the results of those actions will determine how others perceive your competence and your credibility.



Former HP and eBay CEO Meg Whitman frequently shares advice with young professionals about how to develop professional credibility.

Dave Kotinsky/Getty Images

The Role of Caring in Establishing Credibility

Your colleagues, clients, and even your customers will trust you far more if they know you care about them. When asked about what makes a great leader, Lt. Gen. Nadja Y. West, the Army surgeon general, replied, “One characteristic that stands out in all the leaders I’ve seen is empathy. You don’t have to be like everyone else, but you can try to connect with other people. People can tell if you care about them or not.”¹⁸ In the business world, **caring** implies understanding the interests of others, cultivating a sense of community, and giving to others and showing generosity. In the past, caring was seldom discussed as integral to business. Now, it is among the most important abilities for business leaders and managers. In fact, a recent study of business managers found that caring is considered among the top 3 skills or abilities (from a list of 18 skills or abilities) for managers of nearly any business discipline.¹⁹

Understanding the Interests of Others

Your ability to gain credibility strongly depends on your ability to show that you care for the needs of others. Furthermore, your ability to show you care puts you in a rare position as a business leader. After all, less than half (42 percent) of employees believe their managers care about them. Even worse, less than one-third (29 percent) of employees believe their managers care about whether they develop skills.²⁰

Effective communicators gain trust by connecting with others—that is, seeking to understand others’ needs, wants, opinions, feelings, and



Lt. Gen. Nadja Y. West often talks about how leaders must genuinely care for others.

Source: U.S. Department of Defense

aspirations. Virtually every aspect of communication you will focus on in this book relies on this other-orientation.

Cultivating a Sense of Community

The most effective business leaders in today's corporate environment have generally risen to their positions because of their sense of community and teamwork. Meredith Ashby and Stephen Miles recently interviewed hundreds of prominent and accomplished business leaders to answer questions such as *What are the burning issues for corporate leaders today?* and *How do companies identify, attract, develop, and retain the best and brightest people in the workplace?* Here is what they learned from these CEOs:

Most defined their main responsibility as chief executive to be that of inspiring, influencing, setting the direction for, facilitating, coaching, mentoring, and developing their employees. The word "control" was rarely used; instead, they spoke emphatically about the importance of a strong team orientation. Their role was to identify and empower a team, not command it. Indeed, many of them characteristically used the term "we" rather than "I" in discussing success within the organization. Instead of thinking in terms of individual accomplishment, most tended to think in terms of what their management teams had achieved.²¹

Throughout this textbook, you will see techniques for communicating your "we" and "you" orientation rather than a "me" orientation. Speaking about "our needs" or "your needs" as opposed to "my needs" engenders trust and helps you come up with solutions that achieve mutual benefit.

Giving to Others and Showing Generosity

Recent research has shown that most professionals can broadly be characterized as *givers* and *takers*. Givers are those professionals who go out of their way to help colleagues, respond to their requests and needs, and generously support others in the workplace. Takers are those professionals who frequently ask for favors from colleagues yet infrequently volunteer to help their peers in return.

Dozens of studies in recent years show that organizations with more generous and giving employees perform better. Companies with higher percentages of givers achieve higher profitability, higher productivity, and higher customer satisfaction. In addition, these companies experience lower employee turnover rates. These studies also show that givers are more likely than takers to be rated as top performers. (However, givers are also more likely than takers to be rated the lowest-performing employees. In Chapter 2, you'll learn more about strategies to be a giver *and* maintain top performance.)²² Particularly early in your career, you'll find that gaining a reputation for helping your colleagues will open up many professional opportunities and enhance your professional credibility.

In the opening scenario, Sally is weakest in caring. While she is strong at getting the job done and communicating honestly, she often does not seem to act in the best interests of others. She may even be indifferent to the growth of her colleagues. Yet, many people would choose her as a mentor because they could learn from the best and likely participate in the most important projects.

The Role of Character in Establishing Credibility

Warren Buffett, the legendary investor and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, was recently asked about how he hires people. He responded, "You look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy."²³ Like Buffett, most people look first and foremost at traits such as integrity and honesty when evaluating the character of others. **Character** refers to a reputation for staying true to commitments made to stakeholders and adhering to high moral and ethical values.

**FIGURE 1.3**

What Determines Trust in Individuals in the Workplace?

For Collaboration on Workplace Projects

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit.

Character is central in creating trust. Consider the recent research, depicted in Figure 1.3.²⁴ Business executives were asked what the most important determinants of trust in workplace projects were. Overwhelmingly, character-based traits—that is, honesty, ethical behavior, and willingness to exchange information—ranked at the top.

In the following sections, we focus on several topics closely related to character: business ethics, corporate and personal values, open and honest communication, a stakeholder view of accountability, and fairness in business communications.

Business Ethics

Business ethics are the commonly accepted beliefs and principles in the business community for acceptable behavior. At a minimum, business ethics involve adhering to laws; safeguarding confidential or proprietary information; avoiding conflicts of interest and misuse of company assets; and refraining from accepting or providing inappropriate gifts, gratuities, and entertainment.²⁵

As far as corporate communications, the dominant business ethic in recent years is transparency. **Transparency** involves sharing all relevant information and decision rationale with stakeholders. You will soon be in leadership positions within your organization. You can create a transparent workplace by being accessible, acknowledging the concerns of others, and following through when you don't have immediate answers. Trust-building behaviors include extending trust, sharing information, telling it straight, providing opportunities, admitting mistakes, and setting a good example by following rules.²⁶

You likely will need to analyze ethical dilemmas in your business program, while training for your job, and once you are on the job. You probably recognize that “making the right choice” is not always obvious. In such situations, where the law and ethical principles do not provide a clear answer, transparency is key: Decision making needs to be open, documented, and based on the collective conscience of your work team and affected stakeholders.

Often, employees fail to speak up when they observe potentially unethical behavior. Business professionals remain silent for four basic reasons: (1) They assume it's standard practice, (2) they rationalize that it's not a big deal, (3) they say to themselves it's not their responsibility, or (4) they want to be loyal.



Warren Buffett often talks about the importance of character.

Bill Pugliano/Getty Images

LO1.3 Define and explain business ethics, corporate values, and personal values.



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