CENGAGE

Business Communication and Character

11th Edition

Amy Newman

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About Amy Newman

Amy Newman is a senior lecturer emerita at Cornell University in the SC Johnson College of Business. She specializes in business communication and served in the Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management and the School of Hotel Administration, where she taught undergraduate and graduate courses in business writing, organizational behavior, persuasive communication, and corporate communication. As the director of Grand Challenges @Dyson, Newman managed a required community-engaged learning curriculum. For eCornell, the university's executive education unit, she developed several online courses in crisis communication and building leadership character.

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Part 1

Communicating Character and Building Business Relationships

CHAPTER

1

Introduction to Business Communication and Character

Learning Objectives

After you have finished this chapter, you should be able to

LO1	Describe the relationship between communication and character.
LO2	Explain components of the character, audience, message (CAM) communication model.
LO3	Identify factors to consider during the character check step of the communication model.
LO4	Describe aspects of the audience to consider in business communication.
LO5	Choose the best medium for your message in a business situation.

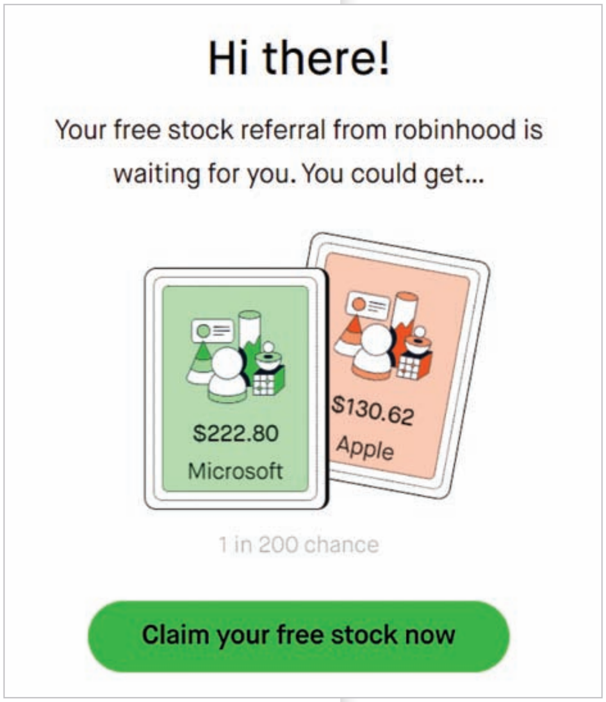
The Learning Objectives (LOs) will help you learn the material. You'll see references to the LOs throughout the chapter.

> “*I Started Trading Hot Stocks on Robinhood. Then I Couldn't Stop.*”[1]
>
> —Jason Sweig, author of *Your Money and Your Brain*

Chapter Introduction

Robinhood Is Fined $65 Million for Misleading Communications

Investment app Robinhood agreed to pay $65 million in fines for misleading customers. The start-up grew rapidly, attracting younger, inexperienced investors with no-fee accounts, zero minimums, and unlimited trading.[2] Redditors using Robinhood and other apps rocked the market in 2021 when they drove up GameStop, AMC, BlackBerry, and other stocks, causing wild price fluctuations with no connection to company performance.[3]


Hi there!

Your free stock referral from robinhood is waiting for you. You could get...

Source: Robinhood, Robinhood.com Homepage, accessed December 18, 2021.

To gamify investing, Robinhood shows playing cards and chances to win.

A lawsuit against Robinhood cited "aggressive tactics" and "gamification"[4] to push users to invest in riskier stocks, resulting in higher trading volume, potentially dramatic losses, and more revenue for the company. A competitor compared using the app to "being in Las Vegas,"[5] and an NBC article describes the persuasive visuals:

> When smartphone owners pull up Robinhood's investment app, they're greeted with a variety of dazzling touches: bursts of confetti to celebrate transactions, the price of bitcoin in neon pink, and a list of popular stocks to trade.
>
> Charles Schwab, meet Candy Crush.[6]

All is well when stocks go up, but when stocks decline, users must make up the loss. For one 20-year-old man, his bill appeared to be $730,000, and he committed suicide.[7] Robinhood's business model and communication raise questions about the leaders' character.

LO1 Describe the relationship between communication and character.

1-1 Business Communication and Character

Your communication demonstrates who you are as a person—what is considered your **character**. Your messages and delivery reflect on you personally, communicating not only your ideas but also what you value and how you care to engage with those around you.

CHARACTER

You might think of character as a fixed trait, but character is a simple habit that is developed over time. Every day, you make critical choices about whether, how, when, and what to communicate. When you make decisions that have positive outcomes for others and for yourself in the long term, you are choosing to be a person of high character. Over time, you develop "moral muscle memory"[8] and more regularly and more easily make better decisions.

Visit the author's blog at amynewman.com for current communication examples.

Character and communication are inextricable. Communication sends signals to others about your character—strong or weak. Based on your communication, others decide whether they will respect you, listen to you, and choose to work with you. Fortunately, we can choose to develop our character and illustrate strong character in our communication.

1-1a The Value of Proficient Communication Skills

As a result of your work in this course, with this book and your instructor as your guides, you will develop proficient communication skills that employers value. Written, oral, and interpersonal communication as well as leadership and teamwork skills rank highly on lists of skills that employers seek in new hires.[9]

Your communication differentiates you during the job search and on the job. Competence in writing and speaking helps you get hired, perform well, and earn promotions. If you decide to go into business for yourself, communication skills help you find investors, promote your product, and manage your employees. These same skills also help you in your personal life with family, friends, partners, and community members.

In most jobs, people communicate more than they do any other activity. **Communication** is the process of sending and receiving messages—sometimes **verbally** through spoken or written words and sometimes **nonverbally** through facial expressions, gestures, postures, and voice qualities. If you send a message to someone and they receive it, communication will have taken place. At work, you communicate by writing emails, attending meetings, producing reports, posting online, conducting interviews, blogging, delivering presentations, and more. You also communicate with your silence and lack of response.

"If you get to my age in life and nobody thinks well of you, I don't care how big your bank account is, your life is a disaster."[11]
SCHOO

Drew Angerer/Getty Images

Chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway Warren Buffett speaks of character in his own life.

1-1b Demonstrating Character Through Communication

Good communication demonstrates that you're a person—and a leader—of good character who makes a positive impact on others over time. In Figure 1, you'll see examples of character dimensions that we'll revisit throughout the book.

CHARACTER

Multinational conglomerate holding company Berkshire Hathaway hires for character. Chairman and CEO Warren Buffett, also known for his philanthropy, describes three qualities the company looks for in new employees: intelligence, initiative (or energy), and integrity. He explains, "And if they don't have the latter, the first two will kill you. Because if you're going to get someone without integrity, you want him lazy and dumb."[10]

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Character Dimensions and Business Communication **Figure 1**

CHARACTER DIMENSION	DEFINITION	COMMUNICATION EXAMPLES
Accountability	Taking responsibility	Admitting a mistake and taking steps to solve problems caused
Authenticity	Living as your genuine self	Acting naturally during a job interview
Compassion	Caring for others and for yourself	Listening to an employee who needs your support
Courage	Standing up for principles despite the risks	Initiating a difficult conversation with a coworker
Humility	Recognizing our limits and being willing to learn	Exploring downsides of your proposal
Integrity	Acting consistently with your own and with societal values	Creating a LinkedIn profile that matches your resume
Vulnerability	Being willing to accept emotional exposure	Sharing with your coworkers that you need help meeting a deadline

Vadim Sazhniev/iStock/Getty Images

Michael Burrell/Alamy Stock Photo

Throughout the book, you'll read about the relationship between your personal character and business communication. Next, you'll learn a communication model that begins with you.

1-2 Components of Communication

LO2 Explain components of the character, audience, message (CAM) communication model.

How does communication happen in organizations, and how can you make good decisions about your own communication? In this section, you'll learn the basic process of communication: creating a message and getting a response from the audience. Then you'll see how to use the process at work with the character, audience, message (CAM) model.

1-2a How Communication Happens

Communication consists of several components, shown in Figure 2. The communication need and context drive initial decisions about the message. Next, the communicator creates and sends the message—for example, an email, a presentation, or a tweet—that the audience receives. At this point, the audience becomes the sender of a new message—the response, which includes emotional and other reactions.

Of course, communication is far more complex than this model conveys. Messages themselves are complex compilations of explicit and implicit content as well as obvious and subtle emotion. Also, the audience **filters** the message according to their own knowledge, biases, experience, background, and so on. Communication barriers get in the way of messages being received as they were intended, and a response could cause the sender to change course.

In addition, when people interact, they create new meaning together. Communication has consequences: outcomes affect understanding and future interactions.[12] We'll explore this phenomenon more in Chapter 3.

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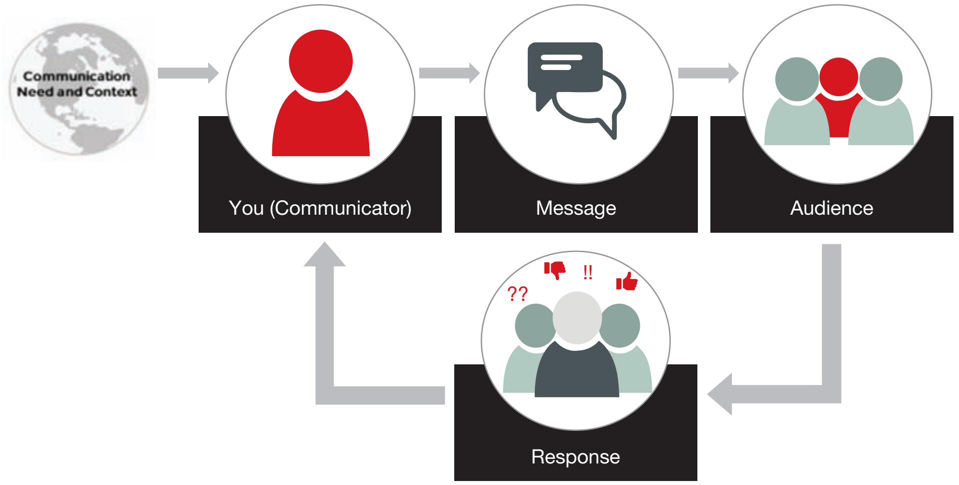
Figure 2 How Communication Happens

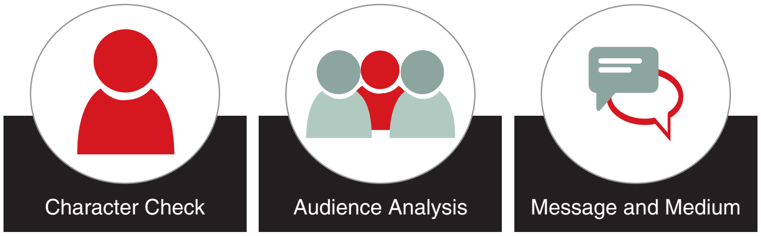


Adapted from a graphic idea from Jeb Bemiss.

1-2b The CAM Communication Model

With a basic understanding of how communication happens, you can follow three steps to develop your own messages: the CAM model—character check, audience analysis, and message and medium, shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 CAM Communication Model



In the CAM model, you'll notice that analyzing your audience comes before you craft your message. The audience receives the message, but first we need to understand ourselves (the character check) and the audience. Then we can send a message that reflects well on ourselves and addresses the needs of those affected.

The rest of this chapter describes what to consider at each stage of the CAM model. Following are a few questions to ask yourself as you make communication decisions:

- **Character Check:** What drives me to communicate? To what am I reacting, and what is my purpose? What impact do I want to have? How do I want others to perceive me? How can I demonstrate good character?
- **Audience Analysis:** How can I tailor my communication to my audience? What context should I consider? How does communication travel within the organization? What barriers might get in the way?
- **Message and Medium:** What is the content of my message, and how will I convey that message?

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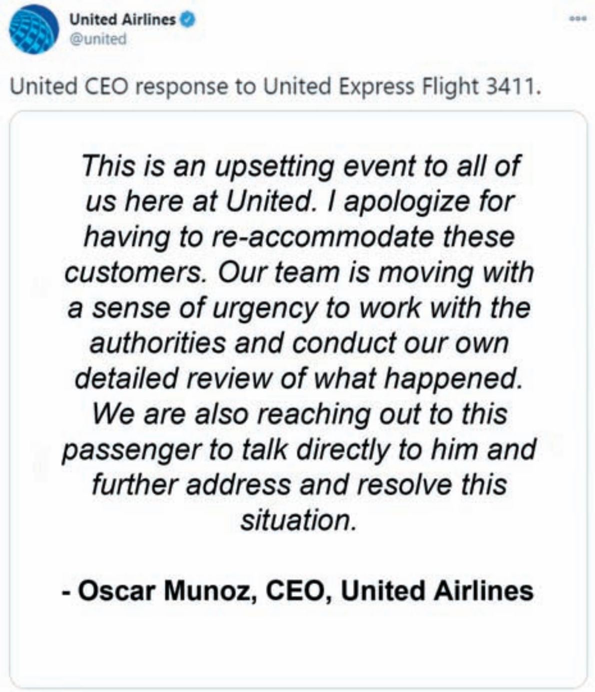
1-3 Character Check

LO3 Identify factors to consider during the character check step of the communication model.

By checking in with yourself first and developing self-awareness, you more likely will demonstrate good character in your communication. This section gives you tools to improve your self-awareness, stay within the law, and make ethical decisions.

We'll evaluate one example using the CAM model: former United Airlines CEO Oscar Munoz's first communication after a viral video of a passenger being forcibly removed on a plane (Figure 4).[13] The airline needed seats for four United employees, and after passengers didn't accept vouchers for other fights, Dr. David Dao was selected to be bumped. He refused to leave his seat and was dragged down the aisle, first screaming and then unconscious with a bloody face.[14]

United Airlines Communication Example | **Figure 4**



United Airlines
@united

United CEO response to United Express Flight 3411.

This is an upsetting event to all of us here at United. I apologize for having to re-accommodate these customers. Our team is moving with a sense of urgency to work with the authorities and conduct our own detailed review of what happened. We are also reaching out to this passenger to talk directly to him and further address and resolve this situation.

- Oscar Munoz, CEO, United Airlines

1-3a Self-Awareness and Emotional Intelligence

Self-awareness was identified as "the most important capability for leaders to develop" by the 75 members of the Stanford Graduate School of Business's Advisory Council.[15] Daniel Goleman identifies self-awareness as the first component in his groundbreaking book, *Emotional Intelligence*.[16] He describes self-awareness as an ongoing process of knowing ourselves and our emotions, strengths, and weaknesses—an honest, realistic assessment that isn't too harsh or too optimistic.[17,18]

Emotional
INTELLIGENCE

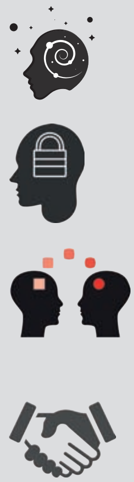
How do you feel about your own communication skills? What messages and feedback about your writing and oral presentations have you received from your family and teachers that may affect how you approach this course?

In each book chapter, look for questions with the "Emotional Intelligence" icon in the margin. Responding honestly will improve how well you understand yourself and how your communication affects your relationships with others.

People with high **emotional intelligence** (or EQ, for emotional quotient) share the four competencies shown in Figure 5.[19] Which of these competencies did the United Airlines' tweet fail to demonstrate? A few obvious examples are demonstrating empathy, considering customers' needs, and managing conflict.

Author of the book *Insight*, Tasha Eurich extends the definition to include "internal" and "external" self-awareness.[20] You might think that you're self-aware, but Eurich found that only 10 %–15% of us really know ourselves and, just as important, know how others perceive us.[21] Regularly seeking feedback is one way to improve our external awareness.

Figure 5 Emotional Intelligence Competencies



Self-Awareness: Understanding one's own emotions and how they affect others, recognizing one's strengths and limitations, and demonstrating self-confidence.

Self-Management: Keeping emotions in check, acting with integrity, being adaptable, striving for excellence, taking initiative, and demonstrating optimism.

Social Awareness: Demonstrating empathy by recognizing others' perspectives and taking them into consideration, understanding group dynamics, and considering customers' needs.

Relationship Management: Developing others, inspiring people, initiating or managing change, influencing, managing conflict, and working with others toward shared goals.

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CHARACTER

Assessing our internal and external self-perceptions is particularly critical for character development because character is judged externally as much as it is internally. Ideally, we know ourselves as we are known to others.[22] How did others perceive Munoz's tweet about the passenger? As we'll see next, not very well.

1-3b Communication Need and Purpose

Today's leaders are in a tough spot. They serve many constituencies—employees, shareholders, customers, the media, the board of directors, and other groups.[23] Munoz's primary objective may have been to protect the company and employees, and this intent certainly is understandable.

But his tweet represents a short-term view—likely a response to internal pressure and a desire to protect his job. Munoz begins with a vague reference to the incident and describes how employees are affected: "This is an upsetting event to all of us here at United." He starts the remaining sentences with "I," "Our team," and "We" and doesn't mention the passenger by name. As any CEO would in this situation, he wants to make the problem go away—to "resolve this situation"—but Munoz fails to consider what others need: a real apology and a commitment to do better next time.

Leaders of high character don't try to smooth things over. With external self-awareness, they take a hard look at how others might perceive them. Then they communicate to achieve better outcomes for more people than just themselves. They think strategically and broadly about long-term impacts of their communication.

To determine your own motivation before you communicate, identify the **communication need**—either from your own thinking or from an organizational situation. Be honest about your purpose and what drives you. Are you looking for accolades or revenge? Are you angry and wanting to show who is in charge? Or do you genuinely want to improve the way others work? Getting clear about what a successful outcome of your communication looks like will keep you focused on what matters. At the same time, you do need to consider legal consequences.

1-3c Potential Legal Consequences of Communication

A leaked United Airlines email from Munoz assured employees, "Our employees followed established procedures for dealing with situations like this."[24] Munoz probably wanted to protect United from lawsuits, and he was right to do so. In a business environment, legal considerations are a real threat.

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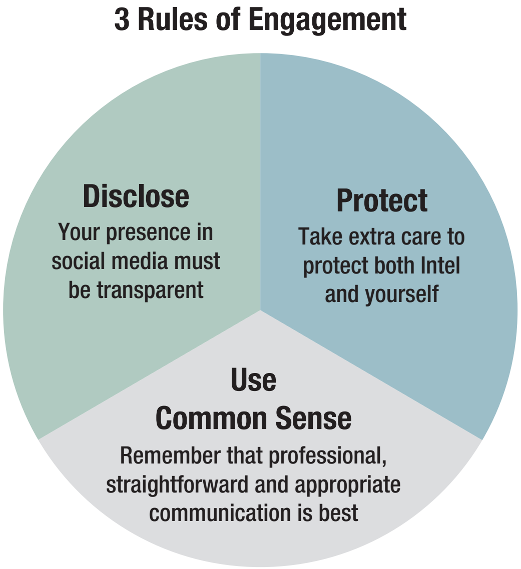
When you work for a company, anything you write and say may become public during a legal investigation. In a discovery process, the company being investigated must produce evidence related to an inquiry, including emails, IMs, texts, recorded phone conversations, voicemail messages, and other communications the attorneys believe are relevant.

When you join a company, you will probably sign several policies about communicating at work. These are designed to protect the company against lawsuits; public relations nightmares; and breaches of confidentiality, privacy, and security.

Your company may provide social media guidelines, such as Intel's, shown in Figure 6.[25] Intel summarizes the advice to employees:

> What do our policies mean? They mean that we trust you. We bring smart people into the Intel family, and we expect you to make smart decisions. This means that you are both the person in the best position to tell the world why Intel is such an amazing place to be and the person best suited to protect Intel from harm.

Intel's Social Media Guidelines | **Figure 6**


3 Rules of Engagement
Disclose
Your presence in social media must be transparent
Protect
Take extra care to protect both Intel and yourself
Use Common Sense
Remember that professional, straightforward and appropriate communication is best

You can protect yourself and your company by paying careful attention to what you put in writing and what you say. A law firm suggests asking yourself, "Would I be comfortable two years from now being cross-examined in federal court in front of a jury about the content of this email I am about to send?"[26] If you wouldn't, then don't send the email. You might ask yourself the same question for all communications related to your company.

1-3d Ethics and Communication

Ethics in **COMMUNICATION**

Beyond the legal requirements, companies will expect you to communicate ethically. Each of us has personal **ethics**, or moral principles, that go beyond legal rules to guide how we act. Our ethics represent our personal belief about whether something is right or wrong. As children, we begin forming our ethics based on how we perceive the behavior of our parents, other adults, and our peer group.

Three types of ethics guide our behavior:

- **Professional ethics** are defined by an organization. Employees and members are expected to follow these guidelines, which define what is right or wrong in the workplace—often beyond established laws. For example, your university has academic integrity guidelines to discourage cheating.
- **Social ethics** are defined by society. Cheating also is generally frowned upon by society, as evidenced by public outrage after news reports uncovered incidents of wealthy families inventing athletic profiles, cheating on exams, and offering compensation to get their children admitted into a preferred college.[27]
- **Individual ethics** are defined by the person and are based on family values, heritage, personal experience, and other factors. You have your own beliefs about cheating that guide your behavior.

Why do ethical people make unethical decisions? Some take the easy route. Others strive to win at any cost. Research shows that circumstance makes people most susceptible to bad behavior[28]—**situational ethics**. Michael Lewis, who started his career in investment banking and wrote *The Big Short*, warns of "Occupational Hazards of Working on Wall Street":

> The question I've always had about this army of young people with seemingly endless career options who wind up in finance is, What happens next to them? People like to think they have a "character" and that this character of theirs will

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