

NINTH EDITION

In Mixed Company

Communicating in Small Groups and Teams



J. Dan Rothwell



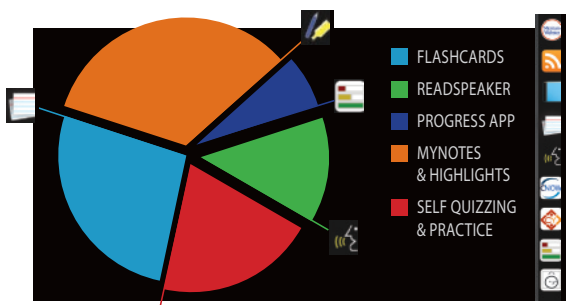
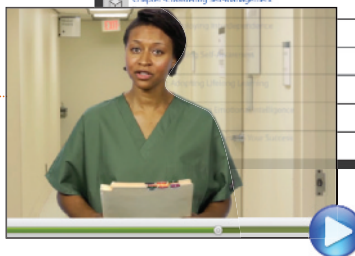
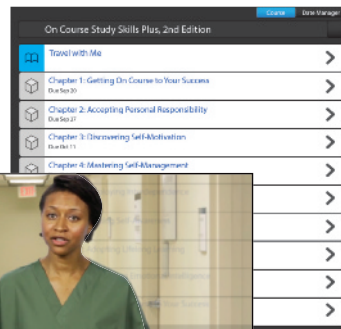
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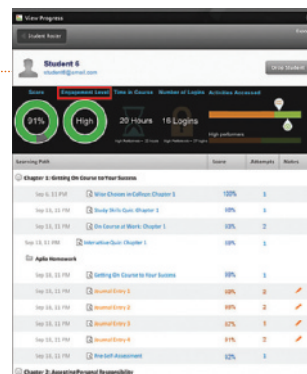
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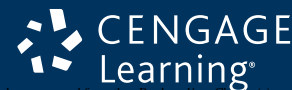
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In Mixed Company

Communicating in Small Groups and Teams

Ninth Edition

J. Dan Rothwell
Cabrillo College



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In Mixed Company: Communicating in Small Groups and Teams, Ninth Edition
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Library of Congress Control Number: 2014952830

ISBN: 978-1-285-44460-4

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Printed in the United States of America
Print Number: 01 Print Year: 2014

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Preface

In *Mixed Company* is the number one selling small group communication textbook. Almost 300,000 students at hundreds of colleges and universities have used it. I am profoundly grateful to all who have helped make *In Mixed Company* such a great success. The eight most recent professional reviews of *In Mixed Company* were exceedingly complimentary. I sincerely thank all reviewers for their helpful insights and suggestions.

For this ninth edition, I have preserved the essence of previous versions. The central unifying theme, that cooperation in small groups is usually superior to competition, has been maintained. The communication competence model continues to guide discussions of key small group concepts and processes. The model is one of the communication discipline's unique contributions to understanding and improving human behavior. It is thoroughly integrated throughout the text. Systems theory also remains as a key theoretical component of the text, providing a conceptual framework for analysis and insights. Finally, the unique focus on power in groups remains. As Dacher Keltner (2007) notes, "To be human is to be immersed in power dynamics." Power is a central underlying element in small group conflict, teamwork, decision making, problem solving, normative behavior, roles, and leadership. I strongly believe that it deserves careful analysis, not simply obligatory mention or cursory coverage.

In addition, I continue to place great emphasis on readability. Textbooks are not meant to read like spy thrillers, but neither should they induce a coma by reading like instructions for filling out your income tax forms. Unlike calculus, which I have no idea how to make interesting, group communication, because of its relevance to your lives, should stir your interest. I have made a concerted effort to stimulate, not sedate you. The risk in telling you this, obviously, is that you may respond, "And that's the best you could do?" Alas, yes. Whatever the shortcomings of this work, I was ever mindful of my audience. I have searched in obvious and not-so-obvious places for the precise example, the poignant instance, and the dramatic case to enhance your reading enjoyment. I have employed a more *narrative or storytelling style* than is usual in textbook writing. I try to tell a story, not merely provide seemingly endless laundry lists of do's and don'ts. Chapter 6, for example, lists several perspectives on effective leadership, but I try to connect these perspectives to the story of how each evolved one from the other. This permits you to see the logical progression of theory and research on leadership. When I do provide lists of do's and don'ts, I try to make at least some of them more interesting to read than a cookbook recipe (see, for example, the "thou shalt nots")

of leader emergence; steps for dealing with difficult group members, six steps of the Standard Agenda, guidelines for brainstorming, guidelines for effective meetings). The Closer Look boxes, vivid examples, and personal experiences are also narrative in nature, included to illustrate ideas and concepts and trigger reader interest. Research confirms that the narrative style not only adds interest but also increases comprehension and recall of information (Fernald, 1987).

I also have attempted to enliven and personalize the writing style by incorporating colorful language and lively metaphors that bring interesting images to mind, and to depart from standard academic practice by employing the “perpendicular pronoun” I. Occasional use of first-person singular speaks more directly and personally to readers than the more impersonal style of writing commonly used in textbooks (such as “in this author’s view”). Although it has been suggested that I employ the “editorial we” instead of the first-person singular, I tend to agree with Mark Twain, who said that “people with tapeworms have the right to use the editorial ‘we,’” but others should avoid it. I could use the passive voice and avoid the first-person singular, but that makes copyeditors twitch.

Finally, I am a great believer in the potential of humor to gain and maintain the attention of my readers. I love to laugh and it gives me great satisfaction to see my students laugh in class, even if it is at my expense because of some goofy mistake I have made (not uncommon). Humor can often cross generational divides and spark interest in scholarly subjects that can seem distant and abstract until a humorous example, quip, or story enlivens the reading and ignites interest, even understanding. There is humor to be found in every chapter. Some chapters have more humor than others, but I have attempted to infuse some amusement for your entertainment and interest whenever possible.

Significant Substantive Changes

There is often the suspicion, not always without merit, that a new edition of a textbook offers mostly cosmetic changes (a few new photos or an occasional new example or reference). This is emphatically not the case for *In Mixed Company*. **Numerous substantive changes have been made for this edition, some obvious and many not so obvious.** They are:

1. The “Roles and Leadership” chapter has been split into two separate chapters. *Discussion of group roles has about doubled in size.* Chapter material has been significantly reorganized. Types of informal group roles have been vastly expanded from a mere table with cursory descriptions to more comprehensive explanations of task, maintenance, and disruptive roles. A section on how these informal roles are actively transacted has been included. Treatment of the newcomer role has

been moved from Chapter 2 to the final section to the roles chapter. The Closer Look box on hazing has been moved from Chapter 3 to add insight regarding how groups often treat newcomers and why hazing occurs

The leadership chapter has been pruned in some places and expanded in others. Charismatic leadership has received more extensive treatment as has the traits perspectives on effective leadership. A new section on psychopathic leaders (horrible bosses) has been added.

2. Careful editing has condensed chapters. Some chapters have been significantly reduced in size, especially Chapter 8 that, ironically, previously included a too lengthy discussion of information overload.
3. Research and theory have been thoroughly updated in every chapter. Almost 200 recent references have been added that incorporate the most current research and theory on small group communication, and more than a hundred older references have been expunged. In all subject areas I have searched energetically for the very latest research and insights. In many cases, the newer research has strengthened support for claims made in previous editions. In other instances, recent research has required important modifications.
4. New, sharper examples have replaced shopworn illustrations. *New business-oriented and workplace examples, surveys, and studies appear throughout the text.* I have also included numerous recent events to illustrate key points and to give the text a contemporary feel.
5. Discussion of technology and its influence on small group communication also has been expanded considerably. In addition to updated coverage of technology in Chapter 12, I have included substantial new material on virtual groups and social media throughout the text.

Continued and Expanded Pedagogical Features

Several acclaimed features of previous editions have been maintained and expanded.

1. Closer Look segments have been updated and carefully edited. See especially “Gender and Communication Competence”; “Gender and Ethnic Bias in Leadership Emergence”; “Dealing with Difficult Group Members”; “Different Criteria Produce Different Outcomes”; and “Murphy’s Law.”
2. Tables, each called Second Look, act as succinct summaries of complicated or detailed material. These can be useful when studying for exams. Each Second Look has been reviewed and in some cases revised.

3. Self-Assessment Instruments in the eighth edition were well received. Some of these instruments have been slightly revised. Self-assessments remain an important part of engaging student learning.
4. The very popular Video Case Studies segment appearing at the end of every chapter has been expanded and includes many recent examples. Some reviewers have requested a DVD with all of the video case studies provided as a free ancillary. As advantageous as this would obviously be to any instructor using the video case studies suggested, the cost of gaining permission to use copyright-protected videos for such a DVD would be astronomical, inevitably sending the cost of producing this new edition into the stratosphere. In this period of hypersensitivity to textbook pricing, such an option is unfortunately not feasible.
5. A glossary of key terms for quick reference appears at the end of the text. Terms that are boldfaced in each chapter are included in the glossary. Many new terms have been added for this edition. A digital glossary is available. See the instructions below to access additional course materials online.
6. Practice quizzes for each chapter appear on the *In Mixed Company* MindTap. These quizzes help prepare students for graded exams. Students frequently mention to me how helpful these practice quizzes have been to them. See the instructions below to access additional course materials online.
7. An already substantial “visual package”—photos, cartoons, and graphics—has been improved. Considerable resources have been expended to make *In Mixed Company* the most visually interesting small group communication textbook on the market. The new, striking cover and the chapter opening photos of Cirque du Soleil should make this improvement immediately obvious.
8. To engage readers, encourage active learning and the development of critical thinking skills, and help students prepare for exams, several photo and cartoon interactive captions offer quiz questions.
9. MindTap Speech, available for the first time with *In Mixed Company*, is a fully online, highly personalized learning experience that enhances learner engagement and improves outcomes while reducing instructor workload. By combining readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments into a singular Learning Path, MindTap guides students through their course with ease and engagement. Instructors personalize the Learning Path by customizing Cengage Learning resources and adding their own content via apps that integrate into the MindTap framework seamlessly with any Learning Management System.
10. PowerPoint slides have been prepared for classroom presentation of material. The new PowerPoint package has been vastly improved!

11. The comprehensive *Instructor's Resource Manual* has been revised. The test bank of exam questions for each chapter has been expanded with more than one version of each question (single answer or multiple answers) available. Both the extensive activities and the test bank included in the manual have been extremely well received.
12. A video entitled, "Working Together," has been shot in documentary style, which illustrates several key classroom activities (e.g., "Building Blocks" and "Power Carnival"). This video can serve either as a substitute for having students do the activities or as a visual guide on how to conduct these very successful innovative exercises in class. The video is available as an ancillary to the text. No longer available from the publisher, interested parties may contact the author and request a DVD copy.

To access additional course materials online, please visit www.cengagebrain.com. At the CengageBrain.com home page, search for the ISBN of your title (from the back cover of your book) using the search box at the top of the page. This will take you to the product page where these resources can be found.

All *In Mixed Company's* companion resources are available to qualified adopters, and ordering options for student supplements are flexible. Instructors, please consult your local Cengage Learning sales representative for more information, to evaluate examination copies of any of the student or instructor resources, or to request product demonstrations.

Text Organization

Although there is no ideal organizational pattern, my schema for the sequence of chapters is quite simple. A theoretical foundation is discussed first (Chapters 1 and 2), followed by how groups are formed and developed (Chapter 3). Then a discussion of how to establish the proper climate for the group to work effectively is presented (Chapter 4). This is followed by an explanation and analysis of what roles group members are likely to play (Chapter 5 and 6). Then, how to build teams and instill effective teamwork in groups is addressed (Chapter 7). This is followed by a discussion of decision making/problem solving—the primary work to be performed by most groups—with special focus on critical thinking (Chapters 8 and 9). The close connection between power and conflict is then explored (Chapters 10 and 11). Finally, virtual groups and technology are addressed (Chapter 12). I can see other ways of organizing this same material, but the order I have chosen works well for me, students seem satisfied with the sequence of topics, and reviewers have praised the organization.

Acknowledgments

My sincere thanks are extended to all those who reviewed this edition of *In Mixed Company*. They are Derek Bolen, Angelo State University; Lori Britt, James Madison University; Alexis Davidson, Sacramento State University; Sandy Hanson, University of North Carolina, Charlotte; Cheryl Hebert, Estrella Mountain Community College; Rozanne Leppington, James Madison University; Paul Mabrey, James Madison University; Jan McKissick, Butte-Glenn Community College; Robert Sidelinger, Oakland University; Karen Swett, California State University, Northridge; and Megan Tucker, George Mason University. I also wish to extend a sincere thanks to all those who reviewed previous editions of *In Mixed Company*, now too numerous to include their names here. My considerable gratitude is extended to the Product Manager, Nicole Morinon. I especially want to thank the Content Developer, Kathy Sands-Boehmer, whose stewardship of this project was stellar from start to finish. To the entire Cengage Learning team, I express my deep appreciation for a job well done. It is a pleasure to work with such capable and pleasant professionals.

I also express my heartfelt gratitude to my colleagues in the communication studies department at Cabrillo College. You are a continuing source of inspiration for me, and you demonstrate daily that cooperation and teamwork can be practical realities, not merely wishful thinking. Finally, to my amazing wife, Marcy, a special thanks for being so understanding and loving when I spent hundreds of hours isolated in my home office working on three textbooks. I remained sane in no small part because of you. The fact that you are such an accomplished and respected professional in your own right is for me a source of great pride and admiration. You have many extraordinary gifts and talents, but I love you just for being the person that you are.

About the Author

J. Dan Rothwell is chair of the Communication Studies Department at Cabrillo College. He has a B.A. in American History from the University of Portland (Oregon), an M.A. in Rhetoric and Public Address, and a Ph.D. in Communication Theory and Social Influence. His M.A. and Ph.D. are both from the University of Oregon. He is the author of four other books: *In the Company of Others: An Introduction to Communication*, *Telling It Like It Isn't: Language Misuse and Malpractice*, *Interpersonal Communication: Influences and Alternatives* (with James Costigan), and *Practically Speaking*.

During his extensive teaching career, Dr. Rothwell has received almost two dozen teaching awards, including the 2010 *Ernest L. Boyer International Award for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Technology* conferred by the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, Florida State College, and the National Council of Instructional Administrators; the 2010 *Cabrillo College “Innovative Teacher of the Year”* award; the 2011 National Communication Association “*Community College Educator of the Year*” award; a 2012 official resolution by the California State Senate acknowledging Dr. Rothwell’s excellence in teaching, and the 2014 “*Master Teacher*” award from the Western States Communication Association.

Professor Rothwell encourages feedback and correspondence from both students and instructors regarding *In Mixed Company*. Anyone so inclined may communicate with him by email at darothwe@cabrillo.edu. Dr. Rothwell may also be reached by phone at 1-831-479-6511.

To my family: Marcy, Hilary, Geoff, Barrett, and Clare

1

Communication Competence in Groups

A. Myths about Communication

1. Myth 1: Communication Is a Cure-All
2. Myth 2: Communication Can Break Down
3. Myth 3: Effective Communication Is Merely Skill Building
4. Myth 4: Effective Communication Is Just Common Sense

B. Communication Defined

1. Communication as Transactional: The Four-Legged Perspective
2. Communication as a Process: The Continuous Flow
3. Communication as Sharing Meaning: Making Sense
 - a. *Verbal Communication: Telling It Like It Isn't*
 - b. *Nonverbal Communication: Wordless Meaning*
 - c. *Verbal and Nonverbal Interconnectedness: Joined at the Hip*
 - d. *Context: The Communication Environment*

C. Communication Competence

1. Effectiveness: Achieving Goals
 - a. *A Matter of Degree: From Deficiency to Proficiency*
 - b. *We (Not Me) Oriented: Primacy of Groups*

Focus on Culture: Individualism versus Collectivism: A Basic Cultural Difference

2. Appropriateness: Following the Rules

D. Achieving Communication Competence

1. Knowledge: Learning the Rules
2. Skills: Showing, Not Just Knowing
3. Sensitivity: Receptive Accuracy
4. Commitment: A Passion for Excellence
5. Ethics: The Right and Wrong of Communication

Focus on Gender: Gender and Communication Competence

E. Definition of a Group

1. Groups: More than People Standing at a Bus Stop
2. Interpersonal Communication and Public Speaking: Ungroups



John Lamparski/WireImage/Getty Images

If you want to find out what people think about groups, ask them. I have. Periodically, I pass out a questionnaire in some of my small group communication classes. The results are quite revealing. Many students seem to view working in groups with the same fondness they have for wisdom tooth removal. Comments include: “If God had ordered a committee to create the world, it would still be discussing proposals.” “Working in groups is like eating tofu. I’m told it’s good for me, but it makes me gag.” “I’ve had the swine flu and I’ve had to work in groups. I prefer the flu.” “I hate groups. I hate group assignments. I hate teachers who require group assignments. Take the hint.” One study found that 58% of students surveyed responded that they did not like group work, and 83% of the same sample, if given a choice, did not prefer to work in groups for a variety of reasons (Gurrie, 2013). Additional surveys of students reveal similar negative views on working in groups (Karau & Elsaid, 2009; Myers & Goodboy, 2005). Sorensen (1981) coined the term **grouphate** to describe how troublesome the group experience is for many people.

There are several reasons for the prevalence of grouphate. First, individuals often believe they have contributed far more to group endeavors than other group members. A whopping 97% of students surveyed by Gurrie (2013) responded that they have experienced being “stuck with all of the work” when doing group tasks. This sole-contributor belief produces a low opinion of groups (Caruso et al., 2006; Epley et al., 2006). Second, there are those group members, called *social loafers*, who underperform (Hoigaard et al., 2006). Their lackluster effort can become contagious because

 **MindTap**
Start with a quick warm-up activity.

other group members want to avoid being taken advantage of, so they reduce their own effort, thereby contributing to group ineffectiveness and a dislike of group work (Hoigaard & Ommundsen, 2007). Third, group work can be time-consuming and unproductive. Executives spend approximately a third of their time trapped in group meetings, and they consider about half of these meetings to be a brain-deadening waste of time (Lippincott, 1999; Schell, 2010). Even more intrusive is the number of separate meetings individuals must attend daily. Employees feel fatigued and overworked when meetings are frequent, and this can put everyone in a surly frame of mind (Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012; Luong & Rogelberg, 2005).

Despite these negative views of groups, almost everyone can point to positive group experiences, including some that are profoundly rewarding (Rains & Young, 2009). The rewards include a feeling of belonging and affection gained from **primary groups** (family and friends) and **social networks** (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter); and social support in difficult times acquired from self-help and **support groups** (Alcoholics Anonymous, cancer survivors groups). Also, you gain satisfaction from solving challenging problems by working in **project groups** (task forces, self-managing work teams), you enhance your knowledge from participating in **learning groups** (class study groups, college seminar groups, Bible study groups, mock trial teams), you experience thrills and entertainment from participating in **activities groups** (chess club, sports teams), and you gain a sense of community from joining **neighborhood groups** (homeowners associations). Finally, you can acquire an identity and achieve pleasure from helping others through **social and service groups** (fraternities, sororities, Rotary, Lions, and Kiwanis clubs), and you may find a creative outlet in **music and artistic groups** (bands, choirs, quilting circles). Of course, a single group may provide many of these benefits.

The most successful groups are composed of members who love working in groups and who experience the rewards. The least successful groups are composed of members who dislike working in groups and who see primarily the disadvantages (Karau & Elsaid, 2009). Participating in successful groups—those that achieve desirable goals and reap valued rewards—improves one's attitude about groups (Isaksen, 1988). Because communication plays such a central role in achieving this group success and producing rewarding experiences, **competent communication is a principal means of counteracting group hate** (Sorensen, 1981). For example, negative attitudes about group meetings are neutralized when meetings are conducted competently (Rogelberg et al., 2006). Those individuals with the most instruction in competent group communication have the most positive attitude about working in groups. Unfortunately, most people do not receive the requisite communication training to be effective in groups, so group hate flourishes.

Whatever the degree of your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with groups, there is no escaping them, unless you plan to live your life alone in a cave as an out-of-touch survivalist. Reliance on groups will increase, not diminish, in the future. The American

Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and the National Communication Association all recommend frequent group activity in the college classroom. Four-fifths of both Fortune 1000 companies and manufacturing organizations use self-managing work teams (MacDonald, 2014). This is a worldwide phenomenon (Wright & Drewery, 2006). Advances in computers and electronic technology have boosted the reliance on **virtual teams**—groups whose members are connected by electronic technology. One large study reported that 80% of employees participate in virtual teams (Solomon, 2010). The same study concluded that “virtual teams are an ever-growing component of global business” (Solomon, 2010; see also “Managing Virtual Teams,” 2009). The “virtual classroom” is also an increasingly popular distance learning option at colleges and universities around the world. In the United States, more than 6.7 million students, a record number, enrolled in online degree programs and courses by the start of 2013 (Sheehy, 2013). Most of these courses require online group discussions and activities, and team projects.

Maximizing the benefits of our unavoidable group experiences seems like a worthy goal. **The central purpose of this textbook, then, is to teach you how to be a competent communicator in small groups and teams.** This purpose presupposes, of course, that there is much for you to learn. Because we all have participated in many groups, it may be tempting to conclude that these experiences leave relatively little for you to learn. Experience, however, isn’t always an effective teacher. Sometimes experience teaches us bad habits and misinformation (note the myths discussed in the next section). I will not presume to tell you what you know and don’t know about small group communication. That is for you to assess, perhaps with the help of your instructor.

When making this initial self-assessment, however, please consider this: **Most Americans have a common tendency to overestimate their communication proficiency in groups.** A long-term study of 600 teams and 6,000 team members in a wide variety of organizations found that assessments of leaders by team members were a whopping 50% lower than the leaders’ self-assessments (LaFasto & Larson, 2001). These same team members also noted the serious communication deficiencies of teams as a whole. Ironically, it is the poorest communicators who inflate their self-assessments the most (Dunning, 2003).

No one is a perfect communicator, so everyone has room to improve his or her communication skills in groups. **The primary purpose of this chapter is to establish the theoretical groundwork for a communication competence approach to small groups and teams.** There are four chapter objectives:

1. To correct some common misconceptions regarding the human communication process,
2. To explain what communication is and isn’t,
3. To identify broadly what constitutes competent communication,
4. To discuss general ways to achieve communication competence.



Read,
highlight, and
take notes
online.

Myths about Communication

Before tackling the question “What is communication?” and then, more specifically, “What is competent communication?” let’s sweep out some of the musty misconceptions many people have stored in their intellectual attics regarding the communication process. As American humorist Will Rogers reputedly remarked, “It isn’t what we don’t know that gives us trouble, it’s what we know that ain’t so” (Fitzhenry, 1993, p. 243). Foolishness springs from holding firmly to indefensible myths. Consider four of them.

► Myth 1: Communication Is a Cure-all

Communication is not the magical answer to all your woes. Sometimes more communication aggravates differences between people and exposes qualities in others you may find unappealing. Active listening may reveal truths that make it impossible for you to remain in a group. Sometimes groups dismantle, not because the communication is poor, but because members have personalities or values that severely clash or because they have contradictory visions for the group. Also, perhaps you’d rather be slow-roasted over a bed of hot coals than address the tedious, trivial task your team must tackle. Pitch-perfect communication won’t likely improve the task or your motivation.

Communication is a tool that, in the possession of someone knowledgeable and skillful, can be used to help solve most problems that arise in groups. **Communication, however, is not an end in itself but merely a means to an end.** You will not solve every conceivable problem in groups by learning to communicate more effectively, because not all group problems are communication based.

► Myth 2: Communication Can Break Down

Communication does not break down. Machines break down; they quit, and if they belong to me they do so with amazing regularity. Human beings continue to communicate even when they may wish not to do so. Behaviors such as not showing up for a group meeting, remaining silent during group discussions, or walking out in the middle of a group discussion without saying a word don’t stop communication. Group members infer messages from these nonverbal acts—perhaps incorrect messages, but potentially important ones nonetheless.

The view that communication can break down comes partly from the recognition that we do not always achieve our goals through communication; the group may disband in failure. But failure to achieve group goals may occur even when communication between the parties in conflict is exemplary. So where’s the breakdown?

► Myth 3: Effective Communication Is Merely Skill Building

The skills orientation to communication assumes that if you learn a few key communication skills, you will become a much better communicator. **Without understanding the complexities of the communication process, no amount of skills training will be meaningful, and it may be harmful.** Merely teaching the skill of assertiveness to a battered woman, for example, without addressing the volatile and often unpredictable circumstances of abusive relationships in families, could prove fatal for the abused woman and her children (O’Leary et al., 1985). Assertiveness with your boss or team leader may get you fired or demoted to a position equivalent to cleaning up after parading elephants. One skill doesn’t fit all circumstances.

Teaching communication skills without knowledge, without a well-researched theoretical map guiding our behavior, is like constructing a house without a carefully developed set of blueprints. The blueprint offered later in this chapter to help you succeed in groups is the communication competence model.

► Myth 4: Effective Communication Is Just Common Sense

Consider **hindsight bias**—the “I-knew-it-already” tendency (Roese & Vohs, 2012). We tend to overestimate our prior knowledge once we have been told the correct answers. Anything can seem like mere common sense when you’ve been given the correct answers, or as psychologist David Myers (2002) observes, “How easy it is to seem wise when drawing the bull’s-eye after the arrow has struck” (p. 89). Everybody knows that opposites attract, right? When told this by Myers, most students find this conclusion unsurprising. But wait! When college students are told the *opposite* (“Birds of a feather flock together”), most also find this result unsurprising and merely common sense.

The hindsight bias may influence us to view competent communication as mere common sense once we have received communication training. If, however, it is just common sense, why does miscommunication occur so often? For example, most teams in organizations fail to achieve their goals (Ellis et al., 2005), and between 80% and 90% of teams have significant difficulty performing well (Buzaglo & Wheelan, 1999; see also Coutu, 2009). A principal reason most teams struggle is lack of communication training in how to make teams work effectively (Ellis et al., 2005).

The simple way to test whether competent communication in groups is merely common sense and you knew it all along is to pose questions before training is received. I often quiz my students at the beginning of a term on general knowledge of group communication (see Box 1.1). I do not ask technical questions or definitions of concepts (making this the least challenging test of the term). Typical questions include: True or False? “Competition motivates higher achievement and performance in groups


BOX 1.1 HINDSIGHT TEST

True-False

Write T or F.

1. _____ Groups should never close off communication, because remaining open to others is a key principle of competent communication.
2. _____ Compromising should be the ultimate and most desired goal when we try to resolve difficult conflicts in groups.
3. _____ Venting your anger, not holding it in, is a constructive and productive way to manage your anger because it allows you to “blow off steam” before it builds to an explosive point.
4. _____ Reward systems that stress individual achievement, such as merit pay plans where the highest-performing group members receive bonuses or pay increases, work well to boost motivation and performance of the vast majority of group members.
5. _____ Competition builds character and teaches most group members how to accept defeat gracefully.
6. _____ If you are highly intelligent, have excellent speaking skills, and are physically attractive, you are highly likely to be an effective group leader.
7. _____ A group can never have too much information when trying to make high-quality decisions on complex problems.
8. _____ The greater the harmony within a group, the better will be the decisions made by the group.
9. _____ Achieving a consensus (unanimity) is always possible in groups if members try hard enough and are skillful in their communication.
10. _____ Some group members can be completely powerless.
11. _____ In general, leaders are born with certain leadership traits. Discovering which member of a group possesses these traits is the best way to determine who will likely be the most effective member to be the group leader.
12. _____ As the size of a group increases, this is almost always constructive because the group’s resources increase.
13. _____ To conduct an effective group meeting in an orderly fashion, parliamentary procedure (a detailed, specific set of rules) should be followed in groups large and small.
14. _____ Intergroup (between groups) competition often increases intragroup (within each group) cohesiveness (bonding among members).
15. _____ Groups need to keep conflict at infrequent levels or even nonexistent if possible to be truly effective.

Answers are given at the end of the chapter.

for most people” and “There is a strong relationship between intelligence and effective group leadership.” Consistently, students do very poorly on this quiz (most flunk). Such results are not surprising or cause for ridicule. I would be foolish to expect my students to do well on this exam before they’ve taken the class.

Learning requires a degree of humility, a willingness to recognize and address our shortcomings. To paraphrase Alfred Korzybski, no one knows everything about anything. Everyone has more to learn. You are invited to approach this text, not with an attitude of contentment with your knowledge and skills (whatever their level), but with a strong desire to learn more and to improve your communication in groups. This improvement comes not just from knowing the right answers on tests of your knowledge of group communication, but also from demonstrating an ability to put this knowledge into skillful practice in a wide variety of challenging group situations.

Communication Defined

Thus far, I have indicated what communication is not, but not what it is. What communication is can be ascertained clearly by first considering several fundamental principles.

Focus Questions

1. How are the content and the relationship dimensions of messages different from each other?
2. “Communication is a process.” What does this mean?

► Communication as Transactional: The Four-Legged Perspective

Wendall Johnson once defined human communication as a process with four legs. Merely sending a message does not constitute communication; there also has to be a receiver. But communication is more than a mere transmission of information from sender to receiver and back again, like Ping-Pong balls batted to and fro. Communication is a **transaction**. This means essentially two things. First, **each person communicating is both a sender and a receiver simultaneously, not merely a sender or a receiver**. As you speak, you receive *feedback* (responses), mostly nonverbal, from listeners; this, in turn, influences the messages that you continue to send. Skillful communicators read feedback accurately and adjust their ensuing message appropriately.

Second, **communication as a transaction also means that all parties influence each other**. You don’t communicate in quite the same manner with your parents as