chapter 1: PROFESSIONAL communication in today’s DIGITAL, SOCIAL, MOBILE WORLD

# Chapter summary

Chapter 1 focuses on the importance and benefits of becoming an effective business communicator and highlights characteristics of effective communication. A definition of effective communication is followed by a discussion of why communication is important in business, and what it means to communicate effectively in today’s global business environment. The eight phases in the communication process are also explored, and the traditional “publishing” model of communication is compared with the newer, more interactive social communication model.

Three key ways to improve business communication are addressed in detail: committing to ethical communication, communicating in a world of diversity, and using communication technology effectively. Examples of unethical communication practices and a discussion of how to recognize ethical choices precede a list of questions to help a communicator make an ethical decision. Readers will learn about ways to recognize cultural differences in areas such as cultural contexts, ethics, social customs, and nonverbal communication. The suggestions for polishing both written and oral intercultural skills can help a businessperson communicate more effectively with those of differing cultural backgrounds, as can the list of tips for working in a culturally diverse workforce. Readers are offered an overview of technologies that connect businesses, and aspects of using communication technology effectively are presented. The information presented in Chapter 1 provides a base for all the remaining chapters in the text.

# Chapter outline

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Communication is Important to Your Career

Communication is Important to Your Company

What Makes Business Communication Effective?

Communicating as a Professional

Understanding What Employers Expect from You

Communicating in an Organizational Context

Adopting an Audience-Centered Approach

Exploring the Communications Process

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The Social Communication Model

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# Teaching notes

## Understanding Why Communication Matters

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

You can have the greatest ideas in the world, but they’re no good to your company or your career if you can’t express them clearly and persuasively.

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

* Closer ties with important communities in the marketplace
* Opportunities to influence conversations, perceptions, and trends
* Increased productivity and faster problem solving
* Better financial results and higher return for investors
* Earlier warning of potential problems, from rising business costs to critical safety issues
* Stronger decision making based on timely, reliable information
* Clearer and more persuasive marketing messages
* Greater employee engagement with their work, leading to higher employee satisfaction and lower employee turnover

Good ideas must be expressed clearly and persuasively. To develop effective messages, be sure to follow these steps:

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

**Communicating as a Professional**

Professionalism is the quality of performing at a high level and conducting oneself with purpose and pride. In this section, readers will learn the significance, and expectation of, being professional.

Professionalism can be broken down into six elements**:**

* Be the best.
* Be dependable.
* Be a team player.
* Be respectful.
* Be ethical.
* Be positive.

Readers will understand how professionalism interacts, and depends upon, effective communication. They will learn the nature of organizational communication and what competencies employers expect:

* Recognizing information needs, using efficient search techniques to locate reliable sources of information, and using gathers information ethically
* Organizing ideas and information logically and completely
* Expressing ideas and information coherently and persuasively
* Actively listening to others
* Communicating effectively with people of diverse backgrounds
* Using communication technologies effectively and efficiently
* Following accepted standards of grammar and spelling for high-quality writing and speaking
* Communicating in a civilized manner, even with indifferent or hostile audiences
* Communicating ethically
* Managing time wisely and using resources efficiently

Readers will learn to differentiate between social, scholastic, and professional styles of communication. They will look at the audience-centered approach to professional communication and begin to understand the importance of proper business communications etiquette.

## Exploring the Communication Process

Communication is a dynamic, two-way process containing eight steps. It is helpful to understand these steps so that you may improve your own skills and be able to recognize the many places and ways in which communication can fail.

The following eight steps make up the communication process:

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

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

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

## The Mobile Revolution

Some experts predict that mobile communication will change the nature of business communication even more than social media has. Mobile devices are the primary communication platform for many professionals, especially those under age 40. The mobile revolution complicates business communication in some ways, but it can enhance communication in many ways, if done thoughtfully.

Some companies now take a mobile-first approach in which websites are designed for optimum viewing on smartphones and tablets. Constant connectivity is a mixed blessing; you can work from anywhere at anytime, but it’s more difficult to disconnect from work and recharge yourself.

The physical limitations of mobile devices require that messages be written and formatted differently. Also, mobile users are often multitasking, so they don’t give their full attention to the information on their screens.

Mobile devices create a host of security and privacy concerns, but can enhance productivity and collaboration. Mobile apps aid in a wide array of business tasks, and can accelerate decision making by putting the right information in the hands of the right people at the right time.

### Committing to Ethical Communication

Business communicators have a responsibility to communicate ethically with audiences. Ethics are the accepted principles of conduct that govern behavior within a society. Ethical communication includes all relevant information, is true in every sense, and is not deceptive in any way. Unethical communication can include falsehoods and misleading information (or exclude important information).

Examples of unethical communication include the following:

* Plagiarizing
* Omitting essential information
* Selectively misquoting
* Misrepresenting numbers
* Distorting visuals
* Failing to respect privacy or information security needs

Deciding what is ethical can be quite complex.

Every company has responsibilities to multiple groups of people inside and outside the firm, and those various groups often have competing interests. When individuals must choose between conflicting loyalties and weigh difficult trade-offs, they face a dilemma.

Ethical dilemmas are not the same as ethical lapses. An ethical dilemma involves choosing among alternatives that aren’t clear-cut. An ethical lapse is a clearly unethical (and frequently illegal) choice.

Employers have a responsibility to establish clear guidelines for ethical behavior. Many companies establish an explicit ethics policy by using a written code of ethics to help employees determine what is acceptable.

Asking yourself six questions can help you make an ethical decision:

* Have you defined the situation fairly and accurately?
* What is your intention in communicating this message?
* What impact will this message have on the people who receive it, or who might be affected by it?
* Will the message achieve the greatest possible good while doing the least possible harm?
* Will the assumptions you’ve made change over time?
* Are you comfortable with your decision?

One helpful way to make sure your messages are ethical is to consider your audience. An important element of audience-centered communication is etiquette, the expected norms of behavior in a particular situation. One’s behavior can have a profound influence on success.

**Communicating in a World of Diversity**

Improving intercultural sensitivity requires the realization of the interaction between culture and communication.

A diverse workforce offers a broader spectrum of viewpoints and ideas, helps companies understand and identify with diverse markets, and enables companies to benefit from a wider range of employee talents. Culture can also create friction, however, because it leads people to assume that everyone thinks and feels the way they do.

Culture is a shared system of symbols, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, and norms for behavior. Although diversity is often narrowly defined in terms of ethnic background, a more useful definition includes looking at individuals as they are defined by their life experiences and characteristics they possess.

Culture affects the way you think which, in turn, affects the way you communicate.

Cultural competency is an appreciation for cultural differences that affect communication and the ability to adjust communication styles and ensure that messages sent across cultural boundaries are sent and received successfully.

Every attempt at communication occurs within a cultural context, which includes:

* Patterns of physical cues
* Environmental stimuli
* Implicit understanding of how to convey meaning between members of different cultures

High-context cultures rely less on the explicit content of the message and more on the context of nonverbal actions and environmental setting to convey meaning. The primary role of communication in high context cultures is building relationships, not exchanging information. Persons from high-context cultures put less emphasis on the written word and consider personal pledges more important than contracts.

Low-context cultures rely more on the explicit content and less on circumstances and cues to convey meaning. The primary task of communication in low context cultures is to exchange information.

Legal and ethical behaviors are also affected by cultural context.

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

Nonverbal communication is a vital part of the communication process. Nonverbal communication includes everything from facial expressions to style of dress. Interpreting nonverbal communication according to your own culture can be dangerous. Even simple hand gestures change meaning from culture to culture.

Cultural differences can also influence perspectives on age. In some cultures, youth is associated with positive characteristics while age is associated with declining powers and a loss of respect and authority. In others, longevity earns respect and increasing power and freedom.

Also, multiple generations in the workplace present another dimension of diversity. Each generation is shaped by dramatically different events and, therefore, has different values, expectations, and communication habits. Each generation brings strengths to the workplace.

Perspectives on gender also vary across cultures, resulting in vastly different views of men and women in business. Gender influences workplace communication in several important ways:

* Perception of men and women in business varies between cultures
* Men in management roles increases steadily as one progresses
* Men and women have different communication styles

Religious differences can lead to a great deal of controversy since religion is one of the most personal and influential aspects of life.

Working effectively with others whose hearing, vision, cognitive ability and/or mobility differ from yours requires respect and care. Follow the tips below to communicate more effectively in cross-cultural situations:

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

To help you prepare effective written communications for multicultural (and multilingual) audiences, remember these tips:

* Use plain English.
* Avoid words with multiple meanings.
* Be clear.
* Cite numbers carefully.
* Avoid slang and be careful with jargon and abbreviations.
* Be brief.
* Use short paragraphs.
* Use transitions.

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

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

Today’s businesses rely heavily on technology to improve the communication process, and you’ll need to know how to use a variety of these technologies on the job. To communicate effectively, you’ll need to keep technology in perspective, use technological tools productively, and disengage from the computer frequently to communicate in person.

**Using Technology to Improve Business Communication**

Today’s businesses rely heavily on technology to facilitate the communication process. The benefits of technology are not automatic—to communicate effectively, keep technology in perspective:

* Use technological tools productively.
* Guard against information overload.
* Disengage from the computer frequently.
* Communicate in person.

When sending a message, ensure it is meaningful and important to the receiver. As the receiver, try to control the number and type of messages received. Focus on job-related messages.

Step out from behind technology frequently to learn more about other people in the workplace.

# Overcoming difficulties students often face

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

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

Students should all be able to provide examples of unethical business actions; however, they may not have viewed some of these as ethical issues as they relate to communication. Engage students by discussing communication documents such as product warranties, product assembly instructions, customer service documents, telephone conversations, marketing brochures and advertisements, human resource documents (including applications and annual reviews), information on company websites, and many others. Stress that some of the examples will be written and some will be oral. Invite students to provide other examples of situations in which ethical issues arise when communicating as a business employee. This discussion can lead to a dialogue about recognizing and making ethical choices. Apply Your Knowledge Exercise 1-9 and Practice Your Skills Activities 1-19 – 1-21 offer students practice in making ethical choices.

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

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

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

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

Some students may be employed by companies with a diverse workforce. Lead a discussion to help the entire class identify the responsibilities a businessperson has to communicate effectively with co-workers. Help students understand that even though employees were born and raised in the United States, they may not share the same cultural background. Pointing out such differences can help students understand that we all need to follow the tips provided for improving workplace sensitivity. This may be a good time to have students complete the Practice Your Skills Activity 1-26 to help them understand that differences also exist in relation to gender, age, and physical abilities.

# Suggested classroom exercises

1. *Get Acquainted.* To help start the class and the term in an enthusiastic manner, ask students to work in teams of two and interview each other. Give students five minutes to gather information about each other. You can either provide a list of facts you want the students to inquire about or invite the class to prepare a list of things they would like to know about each other. Once the students have completed their interviews, ask them to introduce each other using the information they gathered in their brief interviews. To put your students further at ease, you may want to participate by giving them comparable information about yourself. This exercise will help students get to know each other and develop a level of comfort with classmates early in the term.
2. *The Communication Process.* Assign students to work in teams. Each team should prepare its own interpretation of the communication process by drawing a communication model and labeling the various parts. Have the teams share and discuss their models with the rest of the class. This activity can help students comprehend the communication process while emphasizing that different ways of illustrating a concept or process can be acceptable.
3. *Mobile Communication.* Ask students about their opinions on “radical connectivity.” As a generation that has grown up wired, they are likely very dependent on technology in general and mobile devices in particular. Have a discussion about the pros and cons of being connected on the go, and how they believe it will impact their lives as students, and eventually, as business professionals.
4. *Ethical Communication.* Assign students to work in teams of two or three. Each team should prepare a list of ethical and unethical business communication examples it has heard or read about in recent months. Students may also include some examples from their places of employment. To help students get started, you may want to mention some communication examples from Tyco, ENRON, WorldCom, Martha Stewart’s company, and other organizations that have come under fire in recent years for unethical communication actions. Based on examples the teams identify, conduct a discussion about committing to ethical communication, recognizing ethical choices, and making ethical choices.
5. *Culture.* Ask students to assume that they have traveled to another part of the country and have stopped to talk with a resident of the region. Ask students to prepare a list of the points they would mention if the local resident asked the students to describe the culture in which they currently live. This activity should generate some lively discussion about the various aspects of culture, especially if some class members are from different parts of the United States or from different countries. Students may also begin identifying misconceptions that others may have about the students’ local culture, thus leading to a discussion of stereotyping and ethnocentrism.
6. *Intercultural Sensitivity.* Assign student teams to research a particular culture to identify differences in social customs and preferences or rules for conducting business. Make sure some of the students research high-context cultures and others research low-context cultures. Ask each team to share its findings in class. Use these findings as a basis for a discussion of high- and low-context cultures, social customs, and ethical issues in other cultures.
7. *Intercultural Sensitivity.* Invite a panel of businesspeople who grew up in different cultures to address your class. Ask panel members to comment on cultural differences in such areas as context, ethics, social customs, and nonverbal communication. Also ask them to share their knowledge about rules for conducting business in their cultures. If the panel contains persons from several different cultures, this should encourage a significant amount of discussion about intercultural communication.
8. *Teamwork Exercise.* Divide students into groups of six to eight, and give each group a ball. Tell the group that its “mission” is to make sure each member of the group touches the ball at least once and that the team completing the task the fastest wins. (Students will often pass the ball around the group as fast as possible. Give them several chances to try new techniques or, if they do not seem to be trying new techniques, encourage them to do so. Generally, one or two groups will figure out that if one person holds the ball in the center and the other students touch the ball simultaneously, they have discovered the quickest way to complete the task.)

# Test your knowledge

1. The six traits of professionalism are striving to excel, being dependable and accountable, being a team player, demonstrating a sense of etiquette, making ethical decisions, and maintaining a positive outlook. (LO 1.2; AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
2. BYOD stands for “bring your own device” and refers to the phenomenon of employees wanting to use their personal smartphones and tablets to access company files and networks. However, this has security implications. These devices don’t always have the rigorous security controls that corporate networks need, and users don’t always use the devices in secure ways. (LO 1.4; AACSB Tag: Information technology)
3. Ethics are the accepted principles of conduct that govern behavior within a society (they define the boundary between right and wrong). Ethical communication includes all relevant information, is true in every sense, and is not deceptive in any way. (LO 1.5; AACSB Tag: Ethical understanding and reasoning)
4. Cultural context affects expectations in profound and fundamental ways. In high-context cultures, communication relies less on the explicit content of the message and more on the context. In low-context cultures, communication relies more on message content than on message context. (LO 1.6; AACSB Tag: Diverse and multicultural work environments)

# Apply your knowledge

1. This exercise should help students organize their thoughts about how communication keeps organizations running, what business tasks require communication, and how communication benefits business organizations. Students should also realize that effective communication helps employees feel as if they are a part of the business process because they feel supported in their efforts and rewarded for their accomplishments; they also believe that their comments, suggestions, and problems will receive fair consideration, so any problems among co-workers are quickly and easily resolved. Knowing the company’s objectives and having clear instructions on how to accomplish their tasks makes employees confident in their work. (LO 1.1; AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
2. Since an audience-centered approach means focusing on and caring about the members of your audience, including making every effort to get your message across in a way this is meaningful and respectful to the audience, featuring readers’ comments on a corporate blog allows the audience to participate in the conversation. This question can help students better understand the difference between a traditional communication model (with a publishing mindset) and a social communication model, focused on initiating interaction among a variety of participants. (LO 1.2; AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
3. Only by understanding the process of communication can you determine whether each step has been completed successfully. Communication cannot occur if any step in the process is blocked. By understanding the process, you can determine where the problem lies and correct it (e.g., you can determine whether you have chosen an improper channel and medium for transmitting the message or if your receiver is from a different culture). Your knowledge of the communication process helps you send messages that are ethical, audience-centered, and interculturally sensitive. (LO 1.3; AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
4. If readers are typically walking or riding mass transit when viewing your emails, this means they are using mobile devices. This means you should write and format your email messages differently to make them easier to read on these devices. Also, your audience will likely face more distractions when viewing messages on mobile devices, so you’ll need to account for this as well, trying to write messages that are shorter and more focused, as well as more compelling. (LO 1.4; AACSB Tag: Information technology)
5. It is unlikely that students will come to consensus about which strategy is best, but the primary goal of the discussion should be to illustrate the difficulties associated with making business decisions that are, on the surface, uncomplicated. It is also important for students to distinguish between the ethical dilemma presented in the question and possible ethical lapses that could follow. (LO 1.5; AACSB Tag: Ethical understanding and reasoning)
6. This question will help students consider the growing problems faced by employees from foreign cultures. The discussion should be lively with regard to just how much the company is responsible for learning about and adapting to the cultural backgrounds of its employees. (LO 1.6; AACSB Tag: Diverse and multicultural work environments)

# Practice your Skills

## Activities

1. In these introductions, students should include information about their majors, hobbies, likes, dislikes, and future career plans. This activity should give you an idea of the level of your students’ writing or speaking skills, as well as help you get to know them. (LO 1.1; AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
2. This question provides a good opportunity to discuss the advantages and limitations of utilizing social media for business communication. Students should be encouraged to explain how the content of their messages reflects the demands of a social communication model and medium. (LO 1.1; AACSB Tag: Information technology)
3. This question provides a good opportunity to discuss communication modes that are not written, or even solely verbal. Students can talk about both the opportunities and challenges that the video medium affords. (LO 1.1; AACSB Tag: Information technology)
4. In completing this exercise, students should recognize the often-significant differences between how they prioritize their own personal and professional qualities and how a prospective employer might prioritize them. (LO 1.2; AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
5. Student answers might mention that every employee is a representative of the organization and employee behavior should protect the company’s reputation; thus, all employees should receive etiquette training. Answers might also focus on the changing workplace with more emphasis placed on teams and flattened management hierarchies; with these changes, more and more employees might be coming into contact with high-profile clients. Student answers should focus on the premise that business etiquette demonstrates professionalism. Making the case for etiquette training should include the fact that etiquette is one of the six distinct traits of professionalism and means performing at a high level and conducting oneself with purpose and pride. Students should understand that exhibiting professionalism will only increase the success of the production facility by putting its best face forward. (LO 1.2; AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
6. This exercise challenges students to apply their understanding of the communication process. Ask them to be specific about how they encoded and transmitted the idea they wanted to share; also ask them to explain exactly how they knew whether the message had been accurately decoded.

Students might identify such barriers as a difference in perception due to differences in age, background, culture, or language; a lack of credibility, precision, congeniality, or control; a lack of information about the audience; a misunderstanding caused by unfocused, incoherent, or sloppy communication; one party being sidetracked or bringing up unnecessary information; an inability to relate new information to existing ideas; or the noise from environmental distractions, including the emotional states of the people involved or a person’s poor listening ability. (LO 1.3; AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)

1. Students should avoid the tendency to simply explain how widespread the use of social media has become, and how easy it is to utilize the technology. Instead, they should be encouraged to adopt an audience-centered approach that clearly explains the potential benefits of embracing social media as a means of improving the company’s relationship with current and potential customers. (LO 1.3; AACSB Tag: Information technology)
2. Students should be sure to use a mobile device to view the websites, not a laptop or desktop computer. They should evaluate how easy it is to read the content on the device, and note any concessions they think are being made to adapt to the size of the screen and the nature of viewing content on a mobile device. If mobile-only apps exist, those should be evaluated as well. (LO 1.4; AACSB Tag: Information technology)
3. The ethics of each situation may be decided as follows:
   1. De-emphasizing negative test results is an ethical lapse that could affect lives in some situations; for example, when women suffered from defective breast implants.
   2. Using equipment at home would be ethical, especially if permission was obtained.
   3. Helping a friend would be ethical, unless “privileged” information was being conveyed without permission.
   4. Using allocated funding for unnecessary purchases is unethical. It would be better to justify the need for next year’s budget than to preserve it by cheating. (LO 1.5; AACSB Tag: Ethical understanding and reasoning)
4. Students might mention that the employees should always consult a company’s code of ethics (if one exists) before writing anything associated with the company. Students opposed to the ban may argue that it is an individual’s ethical responsibility to alert the public to serious concerns about an organization, and that a policy that bans criticism is unfair and unjust. Additionally, they might note that a blog containing valid criticism of the company may appear as more authentic and credible than blogs that just praise a company. Others supporting the ban may argue that any external communication about a company must be examined by that company since an employee could post something untrue; moreover, if employees are being paid to blog, then the company has a right to edit content. (LO 1.5; AACSB Tag: Ethical understanding and reasoning)
5. After researching Cisco’s Code of Business Conduct, students might mention the following examples that violate the Code of Business Conduct:

* Cisco employees and members of their immediate families engaging in a direct or indirect financial relationship with other businesses that could cause divided loyalty
* Cisco employees not receiving written permission from the Cisco department vice president before beginning any employment, business, or consulting relationship with another company
* Employees serving on outside Boards of Directors or Technical Advisory Boards of a profit-making organization without seeking, prior to acceptance, written approval
* Not disclosing to or seeking approval from the Review Board regarding an investment of more than one percent of total outstanding shares of a public company
* Requesting or negotiating a fee or receiving any form of compensation (except the novelties, favors, or entertainment described below) from the organization that requested the speech, unless the employee first receives express authorization from the Cisco department vice president; or not donating a fee to the Cisco Foundation or other non-profit charitable organization
* Not receiving written permission from the Cisco department vice president before developing, outside of Cisco, any products, software, or intellectual property that is or may be related to Cisco’s current or potential business
* Offering or accepting cash or cash equivalent (such as loans, stock, stock options, or other monetary instruments such as bank checks, traveler’s checks, money orders, investment securities or negotiable instruments)
* Offering, accepting, or participating in any favors, gifts or entertainment or other situations that are unsavory, or otherwise violates Cisco’s commitment to diversity and mutual respect, or that would reasonably cause any customer or Cisco employee to feel uncomfortable, such as “adult entertainment”
* Offering favors, gifts or entertainment over $100 USD per year to a single customer, vendor, or supplier—unless prior written approval of department vice president AND HR manager has been obtained
* Accepting favors, gifts, or entertainment over $100 USD per year from any single customer, vendor, or supplier—unless prior written approval of department vice president AND HR manager has been obtained

Students might list the following opportunities for Cisco employees to report ethics violations or ask questions regarding ethical dilemmas:

* Employees could contact Cisco’s general counsel
* Employees could send e-mail to

auditcommittee@externalcisco.com or ethics@cisco.com

* Employees could mail a letter to a private outside mailbox
* Employees could call several individuals
* Employees could issue internal complaints via the internal website (LO 1.5; AACSB Tag: Ethical understanding and reasoning)

1. This exercise asks students to consider a possible ethical dilemma: choosing among alternatives that aren’t clear-cut.
   1. Students might mention that if employees are violating company policy, then they should be reported; however, others might mention that the boss is unfairly taking advantage of the fact that this person has numerous friends within the company.
   2. The questions that need to be asked before the employee makes a decision include: has the situation been defined fairly and accurately, what is the intention of communicating this information, what impact will this information have on the people who are affected by it, will this information achieve the greatest possible good while doing the least possible harm, will this decision seem unethical in the future, and are we comfortable with this decision (would both parties be proud to describe the situation to someone they respect)?
   3. Students might also wish to discuss whether or not the company has a code of ethics, whether or not employees are aware of company policies and the consequences for violating them, and whether or not the boss has asked others to report this type of information to her as well. (LO 1.5; AACSB Tag: Ethical understanding and reasoning)
2. The slang and acronyms contained in the message are too informal for members of the audience and will probably confuse them. Words and phrases such as *ASAP, our little family, high time, shaking hands across the sea, pleased as punch, my level best,* and *sell you on America* will seriously impair their ability to understand your boss’s message. A fair suggestion would be to rewrite the message, omitting all cultural based expressions and idioms. This message is not audience-centered, as the writer has not considered others’ perceptions and backgrounds. (LO 1.6; AACSB Tag: Diverse and multicultural work environments)
3. Students may find that it’s difficult, even with their own understanding of the expressions, to translate the entire context of these phrases. For instance, “He couldn’t hang” loses a little something when it’s translated to, “He couldn’t hold out and remain calm until the situation concluded or changed.” That’s why slang emerges in the first place—to fill a unique, idiosyncratic language void. This exercise might serve as a good jumping-off point for a lively class discussion. (LO 1.6; AACSB Tag: Diverse and multicultural work environments)
4. Students should find this assignment interesting. A number of books are available on international business communication, and many of them provide country-by-country information. As an option, you may suggest that some students pick two countries and compare their customs, describing the similarities and differences in nonverbal communication, meeting protocol, decision-making processes, and so on. To make this activity more focused, assign each student or team one type of business practice, such as gift giving, and ask them to describe how that practice varies in a dozen or so countries. (LO 1.6; AACSB Tag: Diverse and multicultural work environments)
5. The role-playing should reveal how easily we slip into ethnocentric and stereotypical viewpoints—which interfere with business communication even when the difference is one of age, gender, or physical ability. To deal with the problem, try to view issues from the other person’s perspective. (LO 1.6; AACSB Tag: Diverse and multicultural work environments)
6. To improve the discussion that this exercise can generate, consider assigning different services to different students. The wide variety of services students will access can provide powerful evidence of how widespread the social communication model has become. (LO 1.7; AACSB Tag: Information technology)

# EXPAND your SKIlls

*Critique the Professionals*: Students should understand that their evaluation of the message they select should focus on specific elements from relevant textbook chapters. It is also helpful for them to recognize that examples of ineffective communication can often be as instructive (and, in some cases, even more instructive) as examples of effective communication. (LO 1.1; AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)

*Sharpen Your Career Skills Online*: This exercise calls upon students to use Bovée and Thill’s Business Communication Web Search to research information on an essential communication skill. Students will summarize the content of this source in an email to the instructor, or as a post for the class blog. In either case, the conventions for communicating in the particular medium should be observed, and the summary should clearly and effectively convey the information that was learned. (LO 1.1; AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)

# Improve your grammar, mechanics, and usage

## Level 1: Self-Assessment—Nouns

*In the following sentences, common nouns are underlined and proper nouns are within squares:*

1. Give the balance sheet to Melissa. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
2. After three years of declining sales, the board fired the CEO and hired a replacement from Google. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
3. Tarnower Corporation donates a portion of its profits to charity every year. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
4. Which aluminum bolts are packaged? (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
5. Please send the Joneses a dozen of the following: stopwatches, canteens, headbands, and wristbands. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)

*In the following sentences, the subjects are underlined and the objects are within squares:*

1. The technician has already repaired the machine for the client. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
2. An attorney will talk to the group about incorporation. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
3. After her vacation, the buyer prepared a third-quarter budget. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
4. More than 90 percent of the research staff has contributed to the new wiki. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
5. Accuracy overrides speed in importance. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
6. copies Make sure that all copys include the new addresses. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
7. employees’ Ask Jennings to collect all employee’s donations for the Red Cross drive. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
8. sons-in-law / businesses Charlie now has two son-in-laws to help him with his two online business’s. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
9. parentheses Avoid using too many parenthesises when writing your reports. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
10. Ness’s / week’s Follow President Nesses rules about what constitutes a weeks work. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)

## Level 2: Workplace Applications

1. If a broken-down, unproductive guy like Carl can get a raise, why can’t a take-charge guy like me get one? (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
2. Visit our website and sign up for “On Your Toes,” our free newsletter that keeps you informed about promotions, discounts, and Internet-only specials. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
3. As of March 2015, the Board of Directors has nine members, including three women, one African-American, and one Hispanic American. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
4. We urge you, as one of the nearly three [*or:* 3] million New York Life policyholders eligible to vote, to approve the new investment advisory agreement. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
5. Gerald Higgins, Vice President for Marketing, told reporters that Capital One provides financial services to one-fourth of homes in the United States. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
6. Our customer relations associates work with people every day to answer questions, provide assistance, and solve problems. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
7. If tenants breach the lease, the landlord is likely to file legal action against them to collect on the remainder of the lease. [*Preferable to:* If anyone breaches the lease, it is likely that the landlord will file action against him or her to collect on the remainder of his or her lease. *“Anyone” and “they” could also be replaced by “you,” which changes verb agreement.*] (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
8. The IRA is one of the most common plans for the self-employed because it’s simple to set up and administer. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
9. My advice is to put your mission statement on your website. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
10. According to Karen Smith’s report, many small-business owners don’t recognize the full effect that layoffs and terminations can have on the motivation of surviving employees. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
11. To facilitate the processing of your U.S. tax return, use the mailing label and bar-coded envelope enclosed in your tax package. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
12. The NASE have implemented an exciting array of programs that make it easy for you to voice your legislative opinions and concerns. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
13. Keep in mind the old saying “When you laugh, the world laughs with you; when you cry, you cry alone.” (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
14. Albert Edmunds and I are owners of the real estate firm of Edmunds & Cale, which has recently opened a new office in San Diego County. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)
15. The memo implied that the economic downturn will have a greater effect on the company’s bottom line than we previously assumed; this was the worst news we could have received. (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)

## Level 3: Document Critique—Well-Written Solution

**MEMO**

**DATE:** December 28, 2015

**TO:** All Employees

**FROM:** Roberta Smith, Personnel Director

**SUBJECT:** Implementation of Time Card System

After reviewing our current method of keeping track of employee hours, we have concluded that time cards leave a lot to be desired. Beginning Monday, we will have a new system: a time clock. You will just have to punch in and punch out whenever you come and go from your work area.

The new system may take a little while to get used to, but it should behelpful to those of us who are making a New Year's resolution to be more punctual.

Happy New Year to all! (AACSB Tag: Written and oral communication)