Nature of Communication:
The transmission of any meaningful message is communication. It is as natural a phenomenon as existence itself. Whether we recognize it or not, we have no option but to communicate.

Then we here stands for all things living. A baby cries to convey its hunger. A dog barks to warn his master of an intruder. Corporate organizations which, after all, consist of the human element, use information-based systems like Management Information System (MIS), Decision Support System (DSS) and Strategic Information System (SIS) to run businesses successfully.

This is what communication is all about. Communication is an integral part of human existence. Communication contributes enormously to the success or failure of every human activity. Communication is essentially the ability of one person to make contact with another and to make him understood.

Since man is a social animal, it is vital that he express his feelings and emotions, receive and exchange information. It is here that communication comes into play.

In case of organizations, it becomes even more important as people working in different departments have to achieve common objectives. The working of inter-personal relationships is possible only through communication.

Apart from binding its various components internally, communication is what links an organisation with the external world. Thus, communication is regarded as the foundation of a successful organisation. No group can exist without communication.

Communication has a significant impact on the ultimate potency of an organisation. It is only through communication that ideas, information, attitudes or emotions get conveyed from one person to another.

At the individual level also, effective communication skills are responsible for success. According to a survey of America’s most successful managers by a leading American magazine, Fortune, excellent communication skill was one of the prime determinants of success.

Defining Communication:
The word communication has been derived from the Latin word communis, which means to share or to participate.

Thus, communication stands for sharing or transmission of information, an idea, an opinion, an emotion, a fact or an attitude. It includes both, the act of communicating as well as the message to be communicated.

Attempts have been made by different authors to define communication. A few are enumerated below:

“Communication means to share in, to give to another or the interchange of – thoughts, opinions or information.” Webster

“Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons.” W. H. Newman and C. F. Summer Jr.

“Communication in its simplest form is conveying of information from one person to another.” Hudson

“Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another.” Keith Davis

“Communication is a continuing and thinking process dealing with the transmission and interchange with understanding of ideas, facts and courses of action.” George R. Terry

“Communication is the transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, etc. by the use of symbols, words, pictures, figures, graphs, etc. It is the act or process of transformation that is usually called communication.” Berelso and Steiner

Thus communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another with three sides to it:

(i) Transmission of subject-matter or message

(ii) Involvement of two parties to complete the process of communication

(iii) The person to whom the message is transmitted understands it in the same sense in which the sender of message wants him to understand it

According to Harold D. Lass well, a convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions:

Who

Says

What

Message

In Which

Channel

To Whom

Receiver

With What

Effect?

Reaction

Who

Communicator

Message

Channel

Receiver

Effect

Reaction

Sender: The sender is the person who transmits a message. He is the communicator. He is the one who gets the entire process of communication started. He wants to get his opinions, ideas, facts, thoughts or information across to the receiver. He is, therefore, also said to be the transmitter of a message.

Message: A message is the actual information that has to be conveyed. Communication is unthinkable without a message. A message triggers a response from the receiver. Messages can broadly be divided into verbal and non-verbal. The message must be clear, complete, unambiguous and courteous.

Encoding: The seeds of communication are sown the moment the sender thinks of transmitting a certain message. These thoughts have to be converted into suitable words, pictures, charts or symbols so that they can be delivered to the receiver.

This process of converting thoughts into suitable words, charts, symbols or any other form in which they can be understood by the receiver is called encoding. The choice of the method of communication is made here – will the message be verbal or non-verbal?
Channel: How does one communicate? This is what a channel deals with. Communication is achieved through a channel. The channel can be a letter, an email, a fax, a telephone or memos, reports, bulletins, posters and manuals. The choice depends on the relationship between the sender and the receiver as well as on the message that has to be communicated. Other factors that tend to influence the choice of a channel include the gravity of the message, the number of receivers, the costs involved and the amount of information.

Receiver: The person who receives the message, decodes it and understands it or attaches some meaning to it is the receiver. The receiver has to perform three functions:
(i) Reception of the message: This is the stage when a message sent by the sender is sensorial taken in by the receiver.
(ii) Decoding the message: After receiving the message, the receiver has to attach some meaning to it.
(iii) Understanding the message: He then has to interpret it in the same way and in the same sense as the sender meant it.

Feedback: The return of communication from the receiver to the sender is known as feedback. It is the response, reaction or reply to the communication. It is always directed towards the sender. This completes the cycle of communication. Thus, in feedback, the receiver sends his reply or response to the sender, indicating that he has understood the message received. In face-to-face communication.

Characteristics of Communication: “Communication maintains and animates life. It creates a common pool of ideas, strengthens the feeling of togetherness through exchange of messages and translates thought into action.” UNESCO – Many Voices One World.
(i) Interchange of information: The basic characteristic of human communication is that it aims at exchanging information. It is a two-way process. The exchange can be between two or more persons. It may be at the individual or the organizational level.
(ii) Continuous process: Communication is a continuous process. It is not static. It is constantly subject to change and is dynamic. The people with whom communication is held, its content and nature, and the situation in which communication is held – all keep changing.
(iii) Mutual understanding: The main purpose of communication is to bring about mutual understanding. The receiver should receive and understand the message in the manner that the sender intended him to.
(iv) Response or reaction: Communication always leads to some response or reaction. A message becomes communication only when the receiving party understands and acknowledges it, and also reacts and responds to it.
(v) Universal function: Communication is a universal function, which covers all levels of authority.
(vi) Social activity: Communication is a social activity, too. The components of a society are into a relationship of sharing, be it information, feelings or emotions.

The same holds true for business communication. It involves the effort of people to get in touch with one another and to make them understood. The process by which people attempt to share meaning and relate to one another is, thus, a social activity.

Purposes of Communication:
Communication is meant:

i. To inform

ii. To reassure

iii. To teach

iv. To deliver news, whether good or bad

v. To understand

vi. To explain

vii. To persuade

viii. To transact

ix. To organize

x. To control

xi. To co-ordinate

Among other things

Importance of Communication: The importance of communication to an organisation cannot be overemphasized. It is critical to the success of any organisation and has a very significant impact on the ultimate effectiveness of the whole organisation. Communication is a means by which behaviour is modified, change is effected, information is made productive and goals are achieved.

Business communication can be internal when it is directed to persons within the organisation such as superiors, co-workers or subordinates. Business communication can be external when directed to customers, suppliers, government, public, etc.

Effective internal communication works towards establishing and disseminating of the goals of an enterprise, evolving plans for their achievement, organizing human and other resources in an efficient way. It helps in selecting, developing and appraising members of the organisation, in motivating and encouraging people to put in their best, and in controlling their performance.

Growth in the size and multiple locations of organizations require keeping in touch with employees spread over different states of a country or over different countries. Sending directions and getting feedback from them would be possible only through effective communication.

Rapid technological advancements deeply affect not only the methods of work but also the composition of groups. In such a situation, proper communication between superiors and subordinates becomes very necessary.

External communication relates an organisation to the environment outside. No enterprise can thrive in a vacuum. It has to be aware of the needs of the customers, the availability of suppliers, regulations of the government and the concerns of a community.

Only through effective communication can an organisation become an open system interacting with its environment.

Thus communication:

(i) Binds people together.

(ii) Improves the morale in an organisation.
Factors Contributing to the Importance of Communication: The importance of communication cannot be denied nor should it be underestimated in this era of globalization dominated by modern management education. With the passage of time, society has also become increasingly complex and businesses more global. All these factors have added to the importance of communication.

Let us have an overview of the factors that have contributed to this growing importance of communication:

(i) **Big size of organizations**: Modern organizations are gigantic as compared to those of yesteryears. Moreover, they are in a continuous process of expansion. Communication is the only link among the large number of people in the set-up.

(ii) **Growing importance of human relations**: Modern management has brought in the concept of human resource management. Its importance cannot be ignored. The style of working has changed considerably over the years. It is no longer a management-decides-and-workers-follow kind of working pattern.

Participative management has become the watchword. Men will not cooperate unless they are treated humanely. This has only increased the importance of communication in business organizations.

(iii) **Public relations**: Just like human beings, organizations cannot function in isolation. Every organization has certain social responsibilities. It also has to interact with different segments of society. The responsibilities are towards customers, shareholders, suppliers, traders, trade unions, media, government and the people in general.

(iv) **Advances in behavioural sciences**: Modern management lays great stress on the theories of behavioural sciences like sociology, psychology, philosophy, spiritualism and transactional analysis. Their growing importance can be judged by the tremendous surge in the sale of books on these subjects.

The essence of all the writings is that we change the way of looking at human nature. Improvement in communication skills can do this effectively.

(v) **Technological advances**: Today’s computer age affects not only the methods of working, but also the composition of groups. Communication is the only way to meet the challenge and to strengthen the relationship between superiors and subordinates. Teleconferencing has become a key link for immediate decision-making and feedback in large business organizations.

(vi) **Growth of trade unions**: The last century has seen a tremendous increase in the size of the unions of workers. These unions occupy a very important place in an organizational set-up. Hence, mutual understanding between the management and the unions is very important. Communication, therefore, has a vital role to play.

(vii) **Consumerism (increase in the demand for consumer goods)**: Communication has become an inevitable cycle since the growth of consumerism. In this era of the global marketplace, the competition is really tough, and companies are under constant pressure to attract clientele and to perform. The effort to persuade customers to buy a product is virtually never-ending. This has led to a tremendous growth in communication.

From pamphlets, brochures and advertisements in the print and the electronic media, to workshops, demonstrations, contests and attractive schemes, consumerism has spawned a whole new way of communication.

(viii) **Distance education**: The advent of the Open University system has led to an increase in communication. In many countries, a large segment of population is receiving distance education. In India, IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University is an example.)

Barriers to Communication:

If the sender’s message does not reach the receiver as it is meant to, then there must be some barrier or hindrance. What can it be? And how to avoid such barriers?

Good organizers of communication need to anticipate the barriers and remove them. The barriers range from a poor microphone to an emotional attitude that rejects the message before it is received (e.g. a child unwilling to heed to reason unless its demand is fulfilled first).

For convenience of analysis, we may classify the barriers into five types:

I. Mechanical barriers
II. Physical barriers
III. Psychological barriers
IV. Semantic and language barriers
V. Status barriers

i. **Mechanical barriers**: Faulty mechanism:

A communication may not reach properly if the mechanism that carries it breaks down. To take an extreme case, if the computer typing has been done in devnagari, and while taking the printout the computer is in the Roman mode, not a single letter would be understood. Similarly, if the mirror image of a letter is sent by some mechanical fault, it will be hard to decipher.

Some possible mechanical failures are:

(a) A weak microphone or poor sound spread (acoustics) of the meeting place
(b) Defective telephone lines
(c) Electricity/computer breakdown
(d) Poor printing quality or paper spread of ink, overlap of colours
(e) Atmospherics on radio or TV, especially in a cloudy weather

ii. **Physical barriers: noise, space, time**: Sometimes background noise, whether in a face-to-face meeting or at either end of the telephone, reduces the audibility of the spoken word. Also, if the listener is too far from the speaker, he may not be able to hear him, in which case distance is the barrier. Similarly, the time taken for the message to reach its destination can become a barrier, e.g. a telegram delivered too late.

iii. **Psychological barriers**: These are numerous and require greater effort to overcome:

(a) A person of weak hearing or eyesight cannot always receive the communication in full.
(b) The age of the listener puts its own limitations on his ability to receive messages. One may be too young or too old to understand certain things.
(c) A person’s educational level governs his understanding. Some background knowledge is required to understand certain messages.
(d) Where they understand faster boys are more outdoors oriented while girls tend to take a major interest in housework. A boy who is told to do a “girl’s” job may put up a psychological barrier. (e) A wandering mind cannot fully gather the inputs given to it. While roving is a natural tendency of the mind and the attention span of a listener is limited, there may be other causes of inattention too. These may be visual or audio distractions – gaudy pictures or songs in the neighbourhood.
(f) Ideological loyalties may form a barrier to communication. One may have a political party membership, a philosophical principle (like hedonism, i.e. devotion to sensory enjoyment), and a religious affiliation that has already bound the way one thinks. Such a person may not be receptive to the ideas counter to his ideology.

(g) Loyalty to a brand or an organisation is also a barrier. One who is loyal to a certain brand may not be receptive to a rival product’s add. One may not be receptive to the praises of an organisation other than one’s own, a team other than one’s, countries, and so on.

(h) Emotional states of a person can act as barriers. If someone is in a fit of anger, he/she may not listen to reason. They may also find it difficult to communicate soberly with a person who has not contributed to his anger. There is a spillover effect – the emotion generated by one transaction spilling over into an unrelated transaction.

(i) One’s prejudices act as a hindrance to reason. A prejudice is a judgment formed without proper information. One may have a racial prejudice, a caste prejudice and so on. This is the opposite of an open mind. A liberal education is meant to remove irrational notions which stay on as prejudices.

(j) Personality limitations, too, put a barrier. These are similar to ideological barriers, as some personalities are naturally attracted to certain ideologies. However, personality variations are far too numerous.

One’s aspirations, viewpoints, analyses make one open or closed to certain messages. One bent on getting into a job for livelihood may not listen to the advantages of entrepreneurship.

(k) Fixed images about other people stand as barriers to see them in a new role. A comedian coming in as a hero of a film may not be acceptable to an audience which sees him typed in comedy roles.

(l) Poor retention power is a barrier. If one fails to take timely notes when instructions are given, hoping to remember them all, one has perhaps given away a part of the communication.

iv. Semantic and language barriers: Semantics is the study of how words convey meanings. What happens if the speaker/writer means one thing and the listener/reader takes it in another meaning?

An advertiser offered to sell a “big, bad dog”. While the word “bad” is meant to convey its attacking power to guard a house, some readers may take it otherwise. The context changes the meaning of the word.

One has to ask, is the word conveyed in its proper context? Words are indeed so tricky to use that one can hardly ever convey the same thing to all receivers in given words.

The words generate different meanings in different minds, according to their previous associations and language levels. Literary texts, created by master writers and read by expert critics, are continually open to reinterpretations. Some of this conflict with one another. Yet in business life, dealing with matter-of-fact situations, semantic barriers arise from the inability to read the receiver’s mind. If the sender knows the receiver’s level of understanding, fine.

If not, there is a barrier. A good communicator takes the trouble of removing all ambiguity and wrong coloring of words. As a receiver, he tries to read the words and between the lines.

Semantic barriers arise when:

(a) The sender’s experience with words differs from the receiver’s.

(b) Words from one environment are taken out and put into an environment where they don’t fit.

(c) Opinions are given as facts. “XYZ bike is the most reliable.”

(d) An abstract word is used (in order to be more general and safer) when a concrete word is required. One may want to say that students of a particular college are rowdy, but in order to avoid naming names, one may abstract and generalize, and put the blame on college students as a whole. Similarly, some young men may be impatient, but one might say “Youth is impatient.”

(e) Complex phrases and long constructions are used. Also, when idioms are meant to be understood in the idiomatic sense but are taken in the literal sense. E.g., dot you i s and cross your t s. This may even generate unintended humour.

For language barriers (other than semantic barriers), we all experience how different regional groups, sometimes due to their previous language habits, distort English vowels. Thus, “He is good at batting” may be changed to “He is good at betting”. Lack of proper language skills may lead to wrong choice of words, or of words with wrong associative values.

One hears people saying, “My boss’s behaviour is good,” whereas the proper thing to say would be, “My boss’s treatment of his juniors is good.” But the rudeness may be unintended. Homonyms (words with the same sound) cause difficulty in understanding: there and there, ones and once.

Speakers with different accents find it hard to understand each other. The American accent is insufficiently understood in India while Americans may have a hard time making sense of Indianised English.

Inadequate vocabulary in a new language is a handicap to communication. Hence the praises of word power. Short of words, one may straightforwardly use a native language word in a foreign language: “Today I met an aamdaar “. What the speaker means is an MLA, but the listener may try to associate the word with a mango and get nowhere.

Symbols (non-verbal) create the same problems as languages. The swastik is revered by Hindus but the reverse swastik was a Nazi symbol.

Poor organisation of one’s speech and a harsh voice may also act as barriers. In writing, long paragraphs are out of fashion. They are hard to read. Clusters of big words put a barricade to speed reading.

v. Status barriers: This again is a kind of psychological barrier, where the higher or lower social status of the other party disables one from expressing one’s meaning fully. A modest farmer, asked to express his problems to a high-ranking official or politician, may feel nervous or ill at ease.

Status symbols (e.g. luxury of the surroundings) may halt communication. A candidate from a modest background may be awestruck to see the glitz and glamour of a multinational company where he has to appear for an interview.

Cultural barriers are a special case of collective psychological barriers. A culture brings its own habits, modes of dressing, greeting, eating, food preferences etc. Most people have an element of xenophobia (fear or aversion of foreigners).

Time magazine once commented sharply on American businessmen’s need to allow for differences between American culture and Oriental culture. Only then would they be able to do business with eastern countries. This advice can, in fact, be universalized. Media power which the English speaking countries enjoy tends to give them a false sense of universal acceptability of their culture. In Indian
business, it is a grassroots reality that Indian words and Indianisms are freely used. Exposed to native speakers of English, Indian businessmen are often at a loss.

Resistance to the written word exists as a barrier. The written word demands a commitment. People prefer to listen (if possible in their regional language) and act. Letters remain unreplied while personal visits or telephone calls server the purpose.

How to remove communication barriers:

Resistance to the written word exists as a barrier. The written word demands a commitment. People prefer to listen (if possible in their regional language) and act. Letters remain unreplied while personal visits or telephone calls serve the purpose.

A proper understanding of the nature of barriers helps us to arrive at a solution. All the same, good communicators have to form a new set of general habits and recognize the potential barriers in order to put their meaning across.

(i) **Good listening**: “Listening as a Tool of Communication.” In brief, deep and comprehensive listening helps to overcome barriers. One has to listen to the words as well as the tone. An overworked employee may say, “I’ll do it” with just a little touch of despair. The boss needs to show understanding.

One may develop a better listening capacity by systematically testing oneself on listening comprehension. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is meant to find out, among other things, how well one listens. One may develop a better listening capacity by systematically testing oneself on listening comprehension. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is meant to find out, among other things, how well one listens.

(ii) **Practice in simplifying and clarifying one’s message**: Writers are known to rewrite their text several times to achieve clarity, precision and beauty. Hence regular writing is advisable. The art of writing, says an expert, is the art of rewriting.

(iii) **Obtain feedback, analyze it and respond**: Advertisements are often tested for their pulling power. A slight rearrangement of words or font or layout can make an ad more appealing.

(iv) **Repetition**: Repetition of a message through multiple channels helps to remove barriers which may exist at the first appearance of an idea. Thus one removes the resistance to the new.

(v) **Ambience**: Find the receiver in a receptive mood and ambience. If the audience is, for instance, given more comfortable chairs, it may digest a speech better.

(vi) **Actions speak louder than words**: If the communicator’s sincerity is shown through his actions, people go out to listen to him.

(vii) **Cross-cultural get-togethers**: A systematic effort to bring together people of different cultures goes to increase receptivity. Also, respect for their cultural icons makes the message welcome.

(viii) **Informality is useful**: If the rank and file in an organisation are in awe of the superior (due to his position, education, dress, quality of visitors, excellence in speech, etc.) such a manager may step out of his cabin and go out to the juniors.

Politicians are always doing it during election campaigns – coming out into the street and going door to door. Multinationals also send out door to door salespersons to reduce the distance created by celebrity endorsement (backing by a famous person) of their products.

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### How To Overcome Communication Barriers

We have identified many barriers to communication. It is our turn now to discuss on overcoming barriers to communication and how can communication be improved. A thorough understanding of communication barriers is the basic requirement to find out measures to remove, or eliminate or overcome them. All types of barriers may not arise in all organizations. Organizational barriers arise due to wrong organizational structure. Language barrier arises in organisation where people are of different educational background and hailing from different regions. However, the following are some of the measures towards overcoming barriers to communication.

1. **Orientation** - All the employees in the organization should be given orientation. They should be provided with all necessary information relating to the objectives, policies, procedures, organizational structure etc., This avoids conflicts, communication gap and misunderstanding.

2. **Suitable Language**: - Using proper and appropriate language and tone definitely minimizes linguistic barriers to communication. Communication is rejected for a simple reason that it is not understandable. Use of technical terms should be avoided and the message should be direct, simple and in meaningful language. Different people perceive the message differently. The manager must use common language to avoid semantic distortions.

3. **Good Listening** - Empathetic listening or improving good listening habits by the receiver should be cultivated. The recipient or receiver of communication has equal responsibility to understand in the same sense as meant by the communicator. If the message is without empathetic listening. Response and reaction are not possible. Effective two-way communication is possible with good listening.

4. **Use of Grapevine** - Strategic use of informal communication or grapevine is permitted. In the communication network grapevine has equal important place is an essential part of an organization’s communication. The manager can not ignore grapevine as it exists in spite of a number of limitations. In a number of occasions information should be transmitted only through grapevine. Therefore, strategic use of informal organization will go a long way in improving effective communication.

5. **Actions and Deeds** - Communication through actions and deeds is the principle of effective communication. A message is one to be acted upon. Otherwise, it tends to distort the current and also the subsequent messages from the manager. Actions and deeds often speak louder than words. A meaning to message is achieved only when it is acted upon it accordingly. Action and words must go together. The acts of superior should not differ from what he says.

6. **Clarity** - As pointed out earlier effective communication is vital to successful management; every communication should have the skills to have clarity of message. The greater task is on the part of the sender of the message to achieve clarity. The message must be as clear as possible in the mind of the sender what he wants to communicate. Effective communication is possible only if the message is clearly formulated in the mind. The subject matter should be encoded in the direct and simple language. The purpose of communication is to make the recipient to understand the message; this is possible with clarity of communication.

7. **Knowing the Receiver** - The importance of understanding the receiver and needs of the receiver cannot be overlooked. The message content is to meet the needs of the receiver. The information should be of value to the receiver in the present needs as well as in the long run. Sender of the message is to have full knowledge about the receiver, his capabilities, background, level of intelligence, social climate, receptiveness, temperament and attitudes etc.
8. Inter-Personal Relationship: Developing proper inter-personal relations is more helpful in overcoming barriers to communication. In the organization there must be good relations between different people. Lack of co-operative activity among the people may result in non-accomplishing the dignity, individuality of the subordinates and always be kind and sympathetic to them.

Principles of Effective Communication:

What you say may be important, but how you say it is even more important.

This is a major theme of this book. “Business Letter Writing” where the eight C’s of effective letter writing are discussed: correctness, completeness, clarity, conciseness, courtesy, consideration, concreteness, and convincing power.

However, talking of communication in general, we may state that following are the requirements of an effective give-and-take of ideas and feelings:

1. Simplicity: In practical life, most communication has to be simple, direct and without ornamentation. You have to keep in mind the receiver’s level of understanding and his mind-frame when he receives the message. Pressed for time, he would prefer a simple statement to a complicated one. To simplify, one may use tabulation, graphics, charts, etc. keeping the words to the minimum.

2. Face to face communication: It is generally to the sender’s advantage to get face to face with the receiver. This helps to get an immediate feedback and respond to it. Hence interactive media save time and give instant results. When a salesman is talking across the counter, when a spokesman is addressing a news conference, the message acts two-way hence face-to-face communication may be used wherever possible to the optimum advantage.

3. Use of feedback: The sender or originator of a message should prepare himself to receive the feedback. Then he knows what reaction the message is producing in the target audience. If a new product is launched, surveys may be conducted to know how people feel about it. If an ad is issued, you have to test whether it is working the desired way. Is the message clear? Is it reaching the right audience in the right manner? The quality of reception? This is to be assessed and considered in further planning.

4. Listening with understanding: When you are at the other end of the communication, you have a responsibility as a listener and receiver of messages. You have to be attentive and make an effort to concentrate. To grasp the message fully, you have to attentive yourself to it. You have to keep an open mind and receive the message without criticizing it, approving it or disapproving it until you have heard it fully.

Good listening requires patience and self-discipline. Good listeners help the speaker to become a better communicator. Devoted and sympathetic listening draws the best out of the speaker. That is why listening is called an art.

Also, while listening you have to make mental (or written) notes of the message. Then, at the end of the listening session, you can have a ready summary of what the speaker said.

5. An environment conducive to communication: An environment of trust needs to be created for effective communication to take place. Trust is created by communicating one’s sincere interest in the receiver. The one who is managing the environment has to frame the right policies and take appropriate steps to achieve this.

The management must understand what is creating “noise” or barrier to communication. It has to take steps to remove the barriers. For example, the audience may not be properly introduced to the credentials of the speaker. Or at the time of receiving a message the receiver may be closed or hostile to the sender. It is necessary to set the stage for the communication.

6. Non-verbal communication: Your gestures and posture must be in harmony with the spoken message. You have to learn the technique of expressing yourself well through body language. The speaker should reflect a positive attitude. You should receive the non-verbal communication, too.

7. Use of the “You” factor: The communicator should minimize the “use of I, me and mine, and maximize the use of you and yours. This has to be in spirit as well as words.

8. Awareness of the audience’s bias: The communicator should be aware of the audience’s pre-conceived ideas and should try to set the record straight. Talking in a mixed gathering, he has to be especially careful that he does not generalize or stereotype individuals or groups.

If, for example, some smokers are present in a gathering, he has to exercise care in making remarks about smoking. The same for a group of mixed nationalities.

9. Overcoming differences of language: The same word may convey different meanings to different people because of their varied linguistic backgrounds.

For example, the proper English usage for writing an exam is “to take an exam.” But under the influence of Hindi, one tends to say that the examinee is “giving an exam.” In such cases, it is better to say, “Appearing for an exam.” Also, pronunciation of words has to be acceptable to the audience.

The text as well as the context of the message should be understood. The use of unconventional and technical words should be cautious, and sometimes they need to be explained.

The same goes for short forms which are too numerous these days, with new ones coming into circulation every day. The best practice is to go over the essence of the message and make sure that it is understood.

Benefits of Effective Communication:

Communication Theories and Models:

A theory of any phenomenon seeks to explain how it works. It is a set of statements and general laws relating to it. In the case of communication, we have a number of theories mainly presented as models for an easier understanding.

From the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle to twentieth century scientists, many have proposed models of
There are four major assumptions relating to communication:
(i) Communication is a process which has no beginning or ending – it begins and ends arbitrarily (at random).
(ii) Communication is of the nature of a transaction with many causes and many effects on different people. Some of these are unintended.
(iii) Communication has numerous dimensions. Its sources, audiences, attitudes, tones and influences are multiple. The messages affect both the sender and the receiver.
(iv) Communication serves numerous purposes for different parties that directly or indirectly participate in it. Each party has its own interest angle.

A Survey of Theories/Models of Communication:

To begin with, Aristotle in his Rhetoric (which means the art of speaking and writing for persuasion) says that rhetoric is made up of the speaker, the speech and the audience. This forms the base of modern theoreticians.

1. **Lasswell model of communication:** Lasswell, an American political scientist, seeks to describe communication by asking –

   According to Lasswell, communication has three jobs to do:
   (i) Observe the surroundings
   (ii) Make meaning out of it
   (iii) Transmit culture from one generation to another.

2. **David Berlo’s SMCR or SMCRF model:**
   This popular model primarily takes four elements, namely (i) Sources (ii) Messages (iii) Channels and (iv) Receivers. A fifth element was later added – feedback.
   I. As for the source, we need to be aware how much the source knows, his attitude, his communicative skill and his cultural context.
   II. The message is made up of words, pictures, etc. The source uses the individual elements and joins them to form his meaning.
   III. The channel can be any of the senses- seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting. Multiple channels can be used in communication.
   IV. The receiver, too, is characterized by his/her knowledge, attitude, receiving skills and culture. In the event of a major variance between source and receiver, communication may fail.
   Berlo says that communication is ongoing and dynamic. A piece of communication is a bucket with many bits from many sources – and this bucket is dumped on the receiver. This is also called his bucket theory.

3. **Shannon and Weaver model:** Their theory, presented as a model, has five key components in ideal communication:
   (i) An information source, creating a message
   (ii) A transmitter, converting the message into a signal which can be sent
   (iii) A channel, which can carry the signal to the receiver
   (iv) The receiver, who reads the signal and takes it to the end-user
   (v) The destination, the final user of the message
   This theory adds the sixth, unintended component of noise, present in actual situations, causing interference in the reception of the message.
   In this theory, noise is stated as the main problem in communication. Noise is of three types (see also “Barriers to Communication”):
   (i) Technical problems (e.g. weak antenna of TV)
   (ii) Semantic barriers (“wish him” taken as “poison him” under the influence of Hindi)
   (iii) Problem of effectiveness (an ad jingle in a dull tune)
   To this theory, Kirk and Talbot make a supplement, stating three kinds of noise (for which they use the word distortion).
   (i) Stretch distortion: In this, information is systematically changed.
   (ii) Fog distortion: In this, a message is partly lost due to surrounding interferences (e.g. air-conditioners humming)
   (iii) Mirage distortion: In this, a word or a signal that is not there is received.
   The Shannon and Weaver model was used in India’s planning of communication. It was considered that encoding and decoding are the vital acts and need the most attention.

4. **Osgood and Shramm circular model:** In their model, communication is taken as an eminently two-way process, with both parties sending and receiving by turns, interactively.

5. **Carey’s model – communication as a ritual:** James Carey, an American anthropologist, gave this model. A ritual is a custom, a traditional practice. This model rejects the theory that communication is a means of social
control. Instead, it states that media like TV recall and re-enact myths, values and meanings of life.

Communication is seen simply as creating shared beliefs, representing the beliefs and celebrating them.

6. Paulo Freire’s theory – communication as dialogue: This model rejects Aristotle’s model which sees communication as a transmission of a message. Instead, it takes communication as a means to liberation, participation in collective life and creation of awareness (of rights etc.).

7. Marxism-based model – communication as a power-relationship: In this theory, the focus is on the fact that communication is, at times, an exercise of the power one has over others (individuals or groups). This theory asks us to consider the inequality among classes, castes, economic and social groups. Communication is a reflection of the power-relationship in a family, a factory, or between senders and receivers of mass communications.

8. Indian communication theory: Indian sage Bharat Muni has written on Indian poetics, and calls sadharanikaran the key process in communication. This term is close to the Latin word communistic from which comes the word communication. Bharat Muni says that right communication is between sahradayas (i.e. those whose hearts are attuned to each other’s). To be sahradayas, the sender and receiver have to have a common culture, common learning and be adapted to each other.

Bharat Muni’s rasa theory states that the human mind has nine permanent moods (sthayee bhavas) and these can be aroused to create nine rasas – i.e. types of aesthetic delight. The rasas include bhayanaka rasa (fierce mood), hasya rasa (jocular mood), karun rasa (compassionate mood) etc.

The message, by producing the desired mood (rasa) in the audience, achieves sadharanikaran (unity of spirit).

This theory emphasizes the receiver’s mental conditioning by which he/she can be in tune with the message. Sadharanikaran does not mean to persuade the other party, but stresses the joy of sharing.

In the Indian tradition, communication is a mental search for meaning whose aim is self-knowledge, freedom and reaching the Truth. While Indian model focuses on the interpretation by the receiver, Western models stress expression.

A theory of communication derived from Buddhism stresses the impermanence, the changing nature of communication in the fluid world.

9. Islamic theory – communication for building brotherhood: According to the Islamic theory, umma or community is the main thing in communication as against Western models which deal mainly with the individual receiver. The Islamic theory considers communication as a tool of building relationships in a community. We remember the opposition in the Muslim countries to Salman Rushdie’s heretic novel.

We note that Rushdie is a product of Western education and is patronized by the Western press, and his approach is seen as unpalatable to Muslim communities.

Audience Analysis?

To send out a meaningful communication, the sender needs to know the audience or audiences he is dealing with. Otherwise one lands with a situation where one has spoken but not told.

If it is a buyers’ market, with a choice of products to the consumer, the need to know the audience is even more urgent.

Modern management researchers have identified five types of audiences:

(i) Primary audience: This is the audience that will decide the fate of your communication – to act on it or not to act on it. The housewife who selects the washing soap is the primary audience to soap ads.

(ii) Secondary audience: These are the people who comment on the message and implement the decision once it is taken. The husband who buys the soap from the market is the secondary audience.

(iii) Initial audience: This is the person or persons who are the first to receive the message and then pass it on to someone else to deal with. The general manager may be the one to receive and address a complaint to the sales manager. He is, then, the initial audience.

(iv) “Gatekeeper” audience: These are the people who have the power to stop the message before it reaches the addressee. The secretary to chairman is a gatekeeper audience.

(v) “Watch dog” audience: This includes all alert bystanders who see a message conveyed and, if necessary, react favourably or otherwise. Woman activists, as a watch dog audience, may object to some posters.

No one can see that the communication must pass through the filter or screen, reach where it is meant to, convey the correct sense, be acted upon, and withstand the scrutiny of the alert.

The importance of audience analysis: If you have been sending messages for a large number of people, then you probably know that “many men, many minds”.

Some like an emotional appeal, some an intellectual or scientific. That is why advertisement of a food product says: “Taste may be the reason, vitamins the excuse – or vice versa.” This is a clever device to attract all kind of consumers.

Knowing your audience:

To know an audience is to know what motivates the members of it. In Shakespeare’s play Julius Caesar, Antony has to speak to the Romans after Caesar’s murder. The Romans at that time dislike the dead king. Antony has to gain sympathy for Caesar and create antipathy for the killers.

He starts by befriending the listeners. He then makes an ironical remark about how people forget the good in others (here Caesar), and partially praises the murderers! He does not want to shock the listeners.

He then shows how good a friend Caesar was to Antony... and eventually shows how generous Caesar was to the citizens of Rome.

Antony manages to reverse the mob opinion against the murderers and gets the Romans to hunt for them.

This is a masterpiece of persuasive communication based on common human psychology. A businessman may manipulate minds much the same way. He starts with an appeal to the values which the audience likes even if he has to create new values.

The audience may like the virtue of economy (limited spending), yet the businessman may play on human psychology to sell luxury goods that simplify life and make it comfortable. He appeals to a value (comfort) which is often deeper than the value of saving money.

Two-wheeler makers compete with each other by emphasizing different values in their target audience: the riding joy, the speed and acceleration, the fuel efficiency, the prestige of owning the number one product, and so on. The audience mood changes from one to the other as it receives different messages.

So, after the businessman has made a study of what moves the audience, he adapts his message to it.

Audience analysis guides you to:
- 
(i) Protecting the receiver’s ego
(ii) Blending logic and emotion with suitable images of each
You may organize the message this way:
(i) Be direct except to give bad news (e.g. declining dividends).
(ii) Outline the message.
As for the style of the message:
(i) Make the language easy at every level – words, sentences, quotes.
(ii) Avoid being defensive or rude.
Advice on visuals:
(i) Use charts, models, photos etc.
(ii) Get the visuals designed by graphic experts.
In the case of a mixed audience, it is best to give priority to:
(i) Those that will decide to act or not to act on the message, (ii) The ones who will screen it. A film is made to suit the common taste of the public and the censor board.

Self-Development and Communication:
While one develops oneself as a person, one also becomes a better communicator (listener/speaker/writer/reader); and when one tries to become a better communicator, it helps in an all-round growth of one’s personality.
As such, to understand the relationship between self-development and communication is at the very heart of our subject-matter in this book. Business communication is not an end in itself but a means to achieving professional and personal fulfillment.

Dimensions of self-development: For the sake of a better understanding, we can look upon the human personality as made up of the physical, the intellectual, the emotional and the spiritual side.

Physical betterment means staying healthy and strong by regulating one’s food habits, exercise schedule, rest and recreation. It also requires adequate Medicare.

Intellectual betterment includes acquiring a good memory and imagination and knowledge of the world with which one is concerned: one’s specialisation (economics/management/physics/teaching etc.), driving, civic laws, general knowledge, use of gadgetry, etc.

Emotional betterment aims at staying cheerful and sociable by maintaining good relationships. It requires positive thinking. A good emotional life is the key to overall progress; hence career drivers need to note this.

Spiritual betterment basically means cultivating detachment and an unruffled temper in the ups and downs of life. Prayer, meditation, religious books and discourses help in this, and so does contemplation of the meaning of life.

How self-development helps in better communication?
A balanced and well-adjusted person has a good chance of becoming an effective communicator:
(i) Such a person listens well and notes the hidden meanings too.
(ii) His/her body language – a conscious and unconscious instrument of communication – supports his/her other messages.
(iii) He/she takes a profound interest in all aspects of life and helps others with their self-development.
(iv) His/her group behaviour is pleasant and teamwork productive.
(v) He/she can generate useful ideas from a calm mind.
(vi) His/her holistic perspective on life helps in the quality growth of an organisation and makes him/her a natural leader in course of time.
(vii) To such a person people open their hearts in trust and offer cooperation.

Good communication as an aid to self-development:
A conscious effort to evolve one’s communicative personality results in the person’s overall uplift. Just consider the essentials of good writing: clarity, conciseness, courtesy etc., and the necessaries of effective listening: genuine interest in others, concentration, an open mind etc.

As one improves one’s communicative skills, one has to overhaul one’s entire personality. After all good communication comes from the centre of a person.

Communicative excellence builds up a sound personality in so many ways:
It begins with good listening. This helps to build sympathetic understanding of others. One comes out of oneself and gets liked by others. When one acquires a good speaking ability, one’s confidence goes up and one learns to speak rationally as well as persuasively. One develops an insight into human psychology and eventually masterly understanding of human nature.
(i) Better selections for reading and a good reading speed help the individual to commune with great minds, skip the irrelevant and acquire an idea bank of his own. “Reading makes a full man.”
(ii) Good writing requires, above all, exactness. We know great ancient thought from the well-written books of the past. By cultivating good writing habits, one develops a wise personality. In Sanskrit kavi means both a poet and a wise man.
In this way, self-evolution as a communicator leads to a cultivated mind and spirit, and roundness of personality.

Tips on self – development: A thinking person always evaluates his place in the world and tries to make it better and better.
Here is how:
1. Self-review: Every day and from time to time, he reviews his speech and actions and tries to find out where he has gone wrong or fallen short. Self-review helps him to overcome his weak areas.
2. Good management of time: He manages his time well, beginning with his hours of waking up and going to bed. He plans his work and works his plan. This planning is for a day, a week, a month, a year and the distant future. His estimates become realistic and efficiency sharpens.
3. Developing a calm mind: “A sound mind in a sound body.” A man on the path of self-improvement tries to acquire a health which would enable him to meditate. Swami Vivekananda says that the way to the meditation hall is through the football field. That is, first physical health, power, teamwork – and then meditation.
4. **Communicating with great minds**: He chooses his books and discourses optimally – just the right combination to develop all four aspects of personality something on health-building and removal of diseases; something about the various arts and skills useful in life; great creative literature; and spiritual texts – if possible of all religions.

5. **Building up courage**: A self-improvement fan tries to overcome his fears, whatever they may be, by meeting situations head-on in a planned manner. He also has the initiative to take up good causes. He is proactive – originator of actions.

6. **Humility and gratitude**: Newton pronounced that even with his unequalled place as a physicist, he had just a pebble on the shores of knowledge. Life is short, art is long. This teaches humility. Further, a self-improver learns to be thankful to all who have made him what he is. A wise person is known to thank even his opponent where this is due.

**SWOT Analysis**: In modern management studies, SWOT is a useful buzzword – an analysis of one’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. A SWOT analysis is required in the regular course of a person’s or a company’s life, and especially at the start of an enterprise.

For this, one can overview the past and consider others’ opinions, too. One has to be one’s own final judge and follow the gut feeling. SWOT analysis helps to know one’s standing and choose the correct areas for development and growth.

**Case study 1 (an individual)**: Let us consider Mr. X who wants to be a chartered accountant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths:</th>
<th>Weaknesses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Accountancy and business in the family</td>
<td>(i) Can earn a good income as a C.A (ii) Good law firms are few in the region, hence good scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Good colleges and libraries around</td>
<td>(ii) Can get career satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Consistent first class up to HSSC</td>
<td>(ii) Watches TV too much</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Opportunities:**
(i) May not use his full potential
(ii) May know correct answers but present them poorly

**Threats:**
(i) It would give them financial and career satisfaction.

The remedy for such a person is to regulate his habits and take charge of his time. He needs to hitch his wagon to the stars (keep a high aim) and do some motivational reading. He needs to take a course in grammar and go to a handwriting workshop.

Since he is a borderline case for becoming a CA, he has to remove his fears and develop confidence through test series. At the same time, family successes in accountancy should be used to learn the practicalities. But they should not make him complacent (self-satisfied).

**Case study 2 (an organisation)**: Four friends come together and think of starting a legal firm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths:</th>
<th>Weaknesses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Know one another since childhood</td>
<td>(i) Religious backgrounds differ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) All are graduates in law with a first class</td>
<td>(ii) Religious misunderstandings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Have good communicative skills</td>
<td>(iii) Bad handwriting and grammar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Opportunities:**
(i) Law firms are few in the region, hence good scope

**Threats:**
(i) They live in a town and must migrate to a city
(ii) All are graduates in law
(iii) Have poor understanding of modern means of communication (computers etc.)

The remedy for such a person is to regulate his habits and take charge of his time. He needs to hitch his wagon to the stars (keep a high aim) and do some motivational reading. He needs to take a course in grammar and go to a handwriting workshop.

Since he is a borderline case for becoming a CA, he has to remove his fears and develop confidence through test series. At the same time, family successes in accountancy should be used to learn the practicalities. But they should not make him complacent (self-satisfied).

**SWOT**

**Interdependence**: Interdependence is the mutual reliance between two or more groups. This concept differs from the reliance in a dependent relationship, where some members are dependent and some are not. There can be various degrees of interdependence.

In an interdependent relationship, participants may be emotionally, economically, ecologically and/or morally reliant on and responsible to each other. An interdependent relationship can arise between two or more cooperative autonomous participants (e.g. a co-op). Some people advocate freedom or independence as the ultimate good; others do the same with devotion to one’s family, community, or society. Interdependence can be a common ground between these aspirations.

**History of interdependence of nations**

Authors and leaders have written and spoken about interdependence throughout history, including Karl Marx, Mahatma Gandhi, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Stephen Covey. Karl Marx first used the term interdependence in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) in describing the universal interdependence of nations in comparison to the old local and national seclusion of independence and self-sufficiency.

The various classical civilizations over the ages established vast trading networks with one another. The exchange of goods and ideas occurred from the time of the early Indian Empire on the Indus River, all the way up to the Roman Empire on the Mediterranean.

Today, international interdependence is often said to be strong and to have increased. *International trade* is taken to be an indicator of interdependence, and its high and, with some interruptions, rapidly growing values are accepted as evidence of the increasing interdependence of nations. Between 1820 and 1992, world population increased 5-fold, income per head 8-fold, world income 40-fold, and world trade 540-fold. Sometimes international financial flows are taken as the measure of interdependence.

**Measuring international interdependence**

International disintegration is entirely consistent with a high degree of international interdependence. For interdependence exists when one country by unilateral action can inflict harm on (or provide benefits to) other countries.

Competitive protectionism, devaluation, deflation, or pollution of the air and sea beyond national boundaries are instances. Interdependence is measured by the costs of severing the relationship (or the benefits of developing it). The higher the costs to one country, the greater is the degree of dependence of that country. If a small country benefits more from the international division of labor than a large country, its dependence is greater. If both partners to a transaction were to incur high costs from severing economic links, there would be interdependence.

**Role of interdependence in feminist philosophy**

In the ethics of *care* approach to morality, Nei Noddings emphasizes the interdependence of people. She saw it as a hidden fact not often seen or discussed in male-dominated, justice-based, and judgment-based approaches to ethics. Carol Gilligan was an early proponent of the view that interdependence, rather than rules, underlay the basis of morality.

**Interdependencies in organizational structures**

There is a view that computer technology has allowed greater communication, interaction and interdependence. It is thought that this has massively helped the introduction and start up of new ideas and enterprises. This is supported by the work of Stephen Covey. Covey maintains that we function best as innovators when we recognize, and work towards, the role of interdependence.
In business people and departments must rely on one another to share information, financial resources, equipment and more, making interpersonal communication highly valuable to a company and oneself in order for a successful outcome.

Interdependencies exist when actions in one sub-unit of the organization affect important outcomes in another sub-unit. In a business or firm this can occur for example in terms of product quality, product cost and customer satisfaction. According to the definition of complexity by Eppinger, interdependencies increase organizational complexity. He illustrated this by means of a design structure matrix. The reason Eppinger gives for increased complexity is that many cross-unit interdependencies require frequent coordination and information exchange. Managers of sub-units need to manage these interdependencies.

Four levels of interdependence in organizational structure

**Pooled interdependence** is the lowest form of interdependence resulting in the least amount of conflict. Departments do not directly depend or interact with one another; however they do draw resources from a shared source. Every separate department contributes to an overall goal; the outputs of each department are then pooled at an organizational level. Although the success and failure of each department do not directly affect one another, it does affect the overall success of the company therefore indirectly affecting one another. Pooled interdependence requires standardization in rules and operating procedures. An example of pooled interdependence is the clothing retail store The Gap. Each store acts as its own separate department with its own resources (operating budget, staff, etc.) While each store rarely interacts with one another, the success or failure of each store affects the company overall, which then affects each individual store.

**Sequential interdependence** is an asymmetrical chain of one way interactions. The output of one unit becomes the input for another unit. There is an increase in communication increasing the potential for conflict. People in the early part of the chain would remain more independent but the people in the latter part of the chain would be highly dependent on the first part. A major concern would be performance variability in the first part of the chain because it has a direct effect on the productivity of the later parts. Managing an environment with sequential interdependence would require adaptive planning and scheduling. An example of sequential interdependence would be Nissan. The engine and other separate parts of the car are assembled in separate plants and then are shipped to one site to build the final product. If the engine plant is running behind and not shipped in time, it affects the final product being completed.

**Reciprocal interdependence** has the highest potential for conflict because it requires the most amount of communication having the output and input of activities flow both ways between units. This network of two way relationships requires departmental dependency to create a successful outcome. The direct interaction between co-workers can cause a tight interconnection causing high level of productivity or can cause a high level of conflict. Managing a reciprocal interdependent work environment would require thorough constant information sharing. An example would be the Marriott hotel. The front desk is dependent on housekeeping to provide clean rooms to guests when they arrive and housekeeping is dependent on the front desk to share the information on what rooms need to be cleaned.

**Comprehensive interdependence** is an even tighter network of reciprocal interdependence. The potential for conflicts is very high due to the complexity of the interdependence. With an increase in frequent and intense communication, and a greater duration of time spent with one another, a difference in opinions or goals is very likely. The loss or addition of a team member can greatly affect the performance of the group. An example would be a brand management firm that depends on all the departments for information. The market research department would need to work with product design as well as the sales department and vice versa to achieve effective and efficient productivity.

Factors to determine the degree of work process interdependency

- **Criticality:** For example, how large is the effect of the actions taken in the IT department of an organization on the important outcomes in the Engineering department?
- **Uncertainty:** This is related to both dependability and ambiguity. For example, can the Engineering department rely on the promises that the IT department has made to them? Moreover, to what level do the two departments have the same understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities?

If interdependencies are low of uncertainty and importance, then sub-units enjoy stable and isolated conditions. As uncertainty and importance increase, so does the intensity of communication and collaboration between sub-units and the possibility of conflict. If interdependencies are very high in both uncertainty and importance, then they are likely to produce chaotic situations.

Managing work process interdependencies between sub-units

There are four options to manage interdependencies between sub-units

1. Eliminate an interdependency
2. Add a new interdependency
3. Change the degree of an interdependency between sub-units by altering its uncertainty and/or criticality. Hereby, the need for coordination is reduced
4. Introduce coordination mechanisms, such as phone calls, fax, emails, occasional meetings, regular meetings, committees, liaison officers or integration managers, and cross-functional teams

Usually, the main advice for handling an interdependency has been to introduce a coordination mechanism. The right coordination mechanism needs to be chosen depending on the degree of criticality and uncertainty.

- Interdependencies that are relatively low in criticality and uncertainty, only require managers of the respective sub-units to interchange information (e.g. via e-mail or phone)
- Interdependencies that are considered at least moderately critical and uncertain, may require managers of sub-units to meet regularly to coordinate between them. Moreover, an integrator role (or liaison) can be created by making one employee responsible for coordinating work between the two sub-units.
- Higher degrees of interdependency may require more extensive integration.

Types of interdependencies

1. Activity interdependencies
2. Commitment interdependencies
3. Resource interdependencies
4. Governance interdependencies
5. Social network interdependencies

*Activity interdependencies*
• Are inherent to the actions between sub-units
• Are inherent to the degree of physical input from or between sub-units or the need for information
• Criticality: whether or not the activity interdependency is critical, can be established by measuring the effect of removing the interdependency on the performance of the sub-unit: if, for example, its performance drops heavily when specific information is withheld, criticality could be considered high.

Uncertainty: whether or not it is likely for sub-units to deliver data, goods or services and its accuracy thereof, indicates the uncertainty. Steps to describe them
1. Describe the various tasks or actions involved in a specific work process.
2. Put in a flow chart the routing of information among sub-units
Managing activity interdependencies
• Adding interdependencies. Example: weekly reports by one sub-unit to another
• Removing interdependencies, which is the principle of modularity as proposed by Baldwin and Clark. Example: making use of standard interfaces.

Commitment interdependencies
• To commit to a contract between sub-units is key for a commitment interdependency (e.g. a contract of purchase between suppliers and clients)
• Use of contracts like spot, classical and relational contracts
• Commitments are established by negotiations in an ongoing, authorizing process
• Criticality: high when interdependency has a direct and significant impact on key work outcomes that a sub-unit is responsible for.
• Uncertainty: low (for the client) when a supplier faces and accepts consequential accountability for delivering a product or service.

Managing commitment interdependencies
• Consequential accountability (“no cure no pay”)
• Reducing ambiguity with more detailed service-level agreements and contracts
• Clarifying upstream dependencies
• Specifying interdependencies (“who owes what to whom”) is complicated, but can be done by using the Commitment Protocol as suggested by Scherr.

Governance interdependencies
• Concerns interdependencies related to authority relations in organizations.
• Arise because of a need for formal approval of a sub-unit’s plans or activities by some party or because of a requirement to conduct an activity in conformance with a policy set by superiors.
• Criticality: whether or not a sub-unit’s governance interdependency is critical, depends on the potential effects of decisions made by other sub-units on the work process of the sub-unit
• Uncertainty: the level of uncertainty of a governance interdependency is indicated by its degree of stability and ambiguity

Managing governance interdependencies
It is possible that there are either too few (underrepresentation) or too many interdependencies (micromanagement — loss of autonomy).

The strategies that are then to be undertaken are:
• Clearly define roles and responsibilities, since often in large organizations it is not clear who is responsible for making decisions or solving key business problems
• Make sure that adequate representation is guaranteed
• Make sure that governance maintains or increases trust

Resource interdependencies
• Exist within the transaction of resources between units or when units share their resources Example: financial resource budgeting
• Are mostly based on financial resources, but can also be based on knowledge, human resources, equipment, etc.
• Criticality: whether or not a resource interdependency is critical, depends on the percentage of a sub-unit’s contribution to another sub-unit’s total resources.
• Uncertainty: increases if the resource flow fluctuates or if it is subject to competitive pressures from other (potential) suppliers, but decreases if resource providers lack the ability to switch suppliers.

Managing resource interdependencies
• Enlarge the number of resource providers
• Enlarge the share of resources from resource providers considered reliable
• Enlarge the dependency of the client units (in terms of criticality and frequency)

Social network interdependencies
• Arise when the performance of a work process is influenced by informal ties among sub-units
• The informal ties are created by individuals who represent the sub-unit in his or her interactions with other organizational members
• The informal ties help sub-units to gather or share knowledge across the organization
• Criticality: higher when the effect of the interdependency on the outcome of a certain work unit is larger.
• Uncertainty: increases when perceived dependability and reliability of informal ties are lower. This is related to the level of trust that exists between the parties. Other authors like Sheppard and Sherman believe uncertainty also differs depending on the form and depth of the relationship. Consequently, they proposed four levels ranging from ‘shallow interdependency’ to ‘deep interdependency’

Managing social network interdependencies
• Increase the number of informal ties
• Bridge the gap between disconnected units in the organization
• Strengthen the quality of relationships
• Remove social dependency (however, this is very difficult)
Curiously absent in many scholarly research articles are professional communicators or public relations specialists (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006). Much of the literature in this review suggests that internal communication has long been a struggle between the needs and desires of managers and those of employees. Professional communicators, if mentioned at all, are seen as technicians who carry out the compliance-gaining directives of executives.

But this view is changing, as is the role of communicators. Practitioners today are moving from historical roles as information producers and distributors, to advocacy and advisory roles in strategic decision making, relationship building and programs which foster trust, participation and empowerment. They help their organizations create a strong foundation for success in a dynamic world—a culture for communication that is conducive to open, transparent, authentic two-way communications and conversations.

**Culture for Communication**

Public relations excellence theory is grounded in a systems perspective. The role of public relations is to help organizations develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with internal and external stakeholders through excellent communications. Excellence theory also describes some factors that facilitate or impede creation of a culture for communication. These include: 1) a participative culture where employees are empowered, 2) a two-way system of communication, 3) a decentralized, less formal structure and 4) programs that treat men, women and minorities equitably.

Sanchez (2006) claimed, “How an organization conceives and manages communication does more to tell about its culture than any other single process element” (p. 40-41). He was referring to communication planning, budgeting, staffing and policies. Siegel (2004) cited a Fortune magazine report in which the top 200 “most admired” companies spent more than half of their communication budgets on internal communications. This was more than three times as much as the 200 “least admired” companies. Colvin (2006) reported that the 100 “best companies” share the view that effective and ongoing two-way communication is the foundation for employee motivation and organizational success.

Rhee (2003) found in a comprehensive case study that employees who have positive relationships (high levels of commitment) with their organizations help develop positive relationships with the organization’s publics. In addition, publics assess an organization based on the quality of employee relationships with their organization. Important factors in employee-public-organization relationships include: leaders’ communication behaviors, the extent and quality of F-T-F communication, listening skills, opportunities for dialogue and the involvement of leaders in PR activities.

**Internal Communication and Social Capital**

Kennan and Hazleton (2006) outlined a theory of internal public relations based on social capital theory. Social capital is “the ability that organizations have of creating, maintaining and using relationships to achieve desirable organizational goals”. Social capital accrues through communication, interaction and development of relationships inside and outside of the organization. The use of social capital gained through communication may increase employee satisfaction, commitment and productivity, as well as customer satisfaction.

Trust is the basis for productive relationships, cooperation and communication. Shockley-Zalabak et al. (2000) argued that trust is social capital which directly affects an organization’s ability to deal with change and crisis. They found that trust impacts the bottom line because it influences job satisfaction, productivity and team building; it also was linked to lower incidences of litigation and legislation. Brad Rawlins provided a comprehensive review of trust on this web site.

**Four Contemporary Issues**

Organizations confront many challenges in today’s turbulent global market. They must process continuous changes and shifting workplace demographics, assimilate new technologies, manage knowledge and learning, adopt new structures, strengthen identity, advance diversity and engage employees—often across cultures and at warp speed. Internal communication lies at the center of successful solutions to these issues, and professional communicators must play key leadership, strategic and tactical roles to help their organizations resolve them. This section briefly reviews four issues affecting current practice:

1. **Organizational Identity**

Identification is a big concern for organizations because of the difficulties of being heard in a noisy world and disappearing organizational boundaries (Cheney & Christenson, 2001). Thus, organizations seek to create an identity that distinguishes them from others and ties employees more closely to them. Organizational identity has its roots in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1976, 1986), which refers to an individual’s self-concept that grows out of membership in social groups. Group identity refers to an individual’s sense of what defines “us” versus others. Employees or members also can develop an identity with their organizations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Haslam (2000) found that communication reflects and creates social identities, and shared identity helps build trust and shared interpretations.

Smidts, Pryn and van Riel (2001) found that effective internal communication strengthened employees’ identification with their organizations, more so than perceived external prestige. A strong company identity can boost employee motivation and raise confidence among external stakeholders (van Riel, 1995). As Williams (2008) noted, however, a new generation of employees, less inclined to identify with their employers, requires new approaches to identity building. This may include greater use of new dialogue-creating media and e-communication groups. It also may require more employee interactions with customers and social causes, improved leaders’ listening skills and higher quality F-T-F communication (Rhee, 2003).

2. **Employee Engagement**

According to D’Aprix (2006), engaging employees more fully in their work is the most important issue facing organizations. Engagement refers to “unleashing the full energy and talents of people in the work place” (p. 227). Long an issue, it is more crucial today due to a dynamic marketplace, an information-saturated work place and trust and morale problems exacerbated by waves of downsizing, restructuring and corporate governance problems in the past 15 years (Burton, 2008). Employees are inundated with so much information today that they are overwhelmed, confused and work with the “volume off” (Grates, 2006).

Professional communicators can help by aligning words with actions, building relationships and conversing with employees rather than communicating at them, and helping guide authentic executive actions which reflect organizational purpose. Burton (2008) suggested that new technologies help engage employees by personalizing executive communications and reinforcing face-to-face initiatives. Edelman’s white paper ("New Frontiers," 2006) on employee engagement provides a number of ideas for using social media to better reach and engage employees.

The benefits of an engaged workforce are clear. Izzo and Withers (2000) found that organizations with engaged and committed employees were 50 percent more productive than those where employees weren’t engaged. Employee retention rates also were 44 percent higher. A Watson Wyatt (2002) study found that companies with more engaged employees produce greater financial returns. Engaged employees contribute discretionary efforts, which they otherwise may withhold (D’Aprix, 2006).
3. Measurement

Professional communicators agree that measurement of their work is crucial, but they share few standards for what or how to measure. As a result, many measurement practices are tactical in nature rather than strategic and ongoing (Williams, 2008). In addition, organizations are struggling to set objectives for new social media and to measure their effects in internal and external communication initiatives (Edelman, 2008).

Sinickas (2005) and Williams (2003) provide useful guidelines for conducting audits, developing surveys and other measurement tools, evaluating program results and analyzing and reporting data. Gay et al. (2005) outlined a variety of approaches communicators use to measure the ROI on their work. These include: cost savings measures (e.g., idea development programs); employee surveys, pulse surveys and focus groups for specific communication projects; and business outcome measures (e.g., retention, productivity, customer satisfaction and quality factors). A significant but seldom measured ROI on employee communication is the reduced cycle time for change associated with mergers, acquisitions and other culture-changing initiatives (Berger, 2008).

Employee communication case studies for Sears, Roebuck & Co. and General Motors offer specific examples of company measurement approaches. The GolinHarris Corporate Citizenship Index provides a larger of the contributions that effective and authentic communications make to developing public perceptions of corporate citizenship.

Though steady advances are occurring in evaluating internal communication projects and programs, better measures are needed to assess linkages among communications, longer-term outcomes and desired behavioral changes.

4. Social Media

The Cluetrain Manifesto (Levine et al., 2000) put businesses on notice that the Internet and Intranets were radically altering the marketplace and the nature of stakeholder relationships. New social media facilitate a “powerful global conversation” in which everyone can participate and share opinions, ideas, knowledge and images with each other, and circumvent traditional gatekeepers. Middleberg (2001) claimed that apart from F-T-F communication, no other channels “allowed people to say things more creatively, expressively, precisely, and powerfully than the Internet” and other new media (xii).

Social media refer to new electronic and web-based communication channels such as blogs, podcasts, wikis, chat rooms, discussion forums, RSS feeds, web sites, social networks (e.g., MySpace and Second Life) and other dialogue-creating media. Social media are revolutionizing communications and reconfiguring the long-time S-M-C-R model of internal communication (Williams, 2008). New media increase the volume, speed and every-way flow of communication, connecting people, giving them a voice and stimulating discussions about topics of common interest (Smith, 2006).

Holtz (1999) wrote one of the first comprehensive resource works for practitioners to help guide strategic use of new media. He also co-authored books explaining how practitioners can develop and use blogs (Holtz & Demopoulos, 2006) and podcasts (Holtz & Hobson, 2007) to dialogue and interact more effectively with employees and other stakeholders. However, external PR specialists and marketers have adopted new media more quickly than internal communication professionals. In part this is because organizations no longer control communication, so new media require professional communicators to rethink tactics, strategies and their own roles.

Burton (Insideedge, 2007) referred to social media as “me” communications, which challenge communicators to use them to stimulate employee engagement, provide relevant information and capture employee insights and issues. This means moving the professional role from one of information distribution to open dialogue, letting go of the notion of control, listening closely to others in the conversations, communicating honestly and equipping managers and supervisors as primary communicators.

Edelman’s Trust Barometer found that trust in media is increasing in part because new social media are now perceived as an important component of more traditional mass media. A comprehensive study by The Society for New Communications Research underscored the growing use of social media by professional communicators to disseminate information and engage publics.

Communicators in the survey also rated highly the effectiveness of such media in achieving campaign goals, though measurement is in the early stages. For communicators, social media are here to stay. They also will continue to evolve, possibly to the point blogger Shel Israel suggests, where “people will be able to behave and interact online as they do in everyday life” On the other hand, new media have not killed or replaced traditional media, but rather influenced them and forced them to adopt (Holtz, 2006). Like all channels, new media represent advantages and disadvantages, and communicators must carefully analyze and assess their best use.

“The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one’s real and one’s declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish spurting out ink.” George Orwell, 1946

Principles of Successful Internal Communications

Effective internal communication is hard work, but research findings and case studies point to some practices and principles which seem crucial to successful internal communications for organizations, employees and members. Here are 15 of them:

Timeliness and Content

- Providing timely and relevant information to individuals, through channels they use and trust, and in language they understand, remains the basis for successful and strategic internal communications.
- Communication content should provide context and rationale for changes or new initiatives as they relate to the organization, but especially to the relative performance or requirements of employees in local work units. This underlines the importance of the supervisor’s front-line role in communication.

Channels

- Face-to-face communication is the richest medium. It should be emphasized in internal communications, especially to resolve conflicts or crises, communicate major changes and celebrate accomplishments.
- Excellent listening skills reduce errors and misunderstanding, help uncover problems, save time, improve evaluations and facilitate relationship building. Development of excellent listening skills among leaders at all levels in organizations is crucial.
- Social media are fast and powerful dialogue-creating channels which can empower and engage employees and members. They influence and alter traditional media and their uses, but don’t eliminate them. Communicators should blend new and traditional media in ways that help organizations best achieve their goals and enhance relationships with internal and external publics.

Leadership Roles

- The CEO or senior leader(s) must be a visible and open champion for internal communication. Visibility is the first and most basic form of non-verbal communication for leaders.
- The communication style of leaders should invite open, ongoing and transparent discussion so that people are willing to voice their opinions and suggestions.
The actions of leaders at all levels must match their words. This has everything to do with credibility and the extent to which employees will trust, commit to and follow leaders. As author Carolyn Wells said, “Actions lie louder than words.”

**Professional Communicator Roles**
- Professional communicators must see themselves as internal experts on communication who serve as facilitators and counselors to executives and managers and provide strategic support for business plans.
- Communicators must also be organizational experts. They must possess knowledge of the organization’s structures, challenges and objectives, as well as understand employee issues and needs and marketplace requirements and realities.

**Participation and Recognition**
- Encouraging employee participation in decision making builds loyalty and commitment and improves the overall climate for communication. Participative decision making also often improves the quality of decisions.
- Recognizing and celebrating achievements at all levels helps build shared values and organizational identity. Similar social events, rites and rituals contribute to and reflect an organization’s distinctive culture.

**Measurement**
- Measurement is a key to successful communication in any organization. Through diverse forms and approaches, measurement helps define problems, determine the status quo, record progress, assess value and provide a factual basis for future direction and action. Improving measurement knowledge and practice is an ongoing professional requirement.

**Culture**
- Ongoing two-way communication is the foundation for employee motivation and organizational success. Two-way (now every-way) communication provides continuous feedback, which is crucial to learning and to processing organizational change.
- In addition to achieving specific goals, internal communications should help create and reflect a culture for communication, where employees at all levels feel free to openly share ideas, opinions and suggestions. This will enhance employee understanding, build trust, stimulate engagement and encourage greater diversity.

**Types of Communication**

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<th>TYPES OF COMMUNICATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. AREA OF OPERATION</td>
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<td>(i) ORAL or VERBAL</td>
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<td>(ii) WRITTEN</td>
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Fig. 3.1: Types of Communication.

Semantic is the study of meaning, signs and symbols used for communication. The word is derived from "sema", a Greek word meaning signs. Semantic barriers to communication are the symbolic obstacles that distorts the sent message in some other way than intended, making the message difficult to understand.

The meaning of words, signs and symbols might be different from one person to another and the same word might have hundreds of meanings. So, when a message is sent by a sender to a receiver, it might be interpreted wrongly in a communication process causing misunderstandings between them. This can happen due to different situations that form the semantic(of, relating to, or arising from the different meanings of words or other symbols) of the sender and the receiver, known as the semantic barrier. It also arises due to language, education, culture and place of origin (dialect or accent) or most likely their experiences. It is similar to and related to language barriers in a communication.

**Types of Semantic Barriers in Communication**

**Denotative Barriers**
- Direct meaning of any word which must be shared by two people to understand each other is the denotative meaning. The barriers that arise due to the definition or meaning of a word used differently by sender and receiver is denotative barriers of communication. They disagree on the meaning of a word as they are unaware of the other persons' meaning. For example, the meaning of braces which is used to define the metallic structure to adjust teeth in American English whereas it means a part of clothing in British English.

**Connotative Barriers**
- The implied meaning of a word is known as Connotative meaning. Connotative barrier in communication refers to the difference of meaning according to different abstract situations, contexts, actions and feelings. Both the communicators know both meanings of the word, but use only one meaning according to the context, which might be being used differently in the context. For example, the word astonish can be used to describe surprise as well as startle. The words, when used by someone, can have any of the meaning. The context in which it is used will only let the receiver know what the sender means. Another example is the word god, which is used differently by people following different religions.

**Causes of Semantic Barriers in Communication**

**Homophones, homonyms and homographs**

**Homophones**
- Homophones are the words with same pronunciation but different meaning which might have different spelling too. For example: Words buy, by and bye. They have same pronunciation, but different meanings and spellings.

**Homonyms**
- Homonyms are the words which have the same pronunciation and their spellings are mostly same, but the intended meaning is different. For example, the noun "bear" and the verb "bear" has different meanings but same pronunciation and spelling.
Homographs are the words that have the same spelling but the pronunciation and meaning are different. For example, "The research lead to the discovery of lead". In this sentence, both the words have the same spelling, but different pronunciation and different meanings.

These words can be interpreted wrongly when used unknowingly causing the semantic barrier in a communication process. This, in turn, makes the communication ineffective.

**Cultural difference**

Many words have fixed meanings in different norms. So, confusion arises in communication due to meaning of different signs and symbols in different cultures, causing semantic barrier. The use of the “Swastika” symbol in Hinduism and for German Nazi cab be taken as an example. The symbol was used by Hitler for his rule and is taken as something to fear, whereas swastika in Hinduism takes it as auspicious and lucky. People belonging to these two cultures take the symbol differently. If people belonging to these two cultures talk or use the symbol, it can lead to conflicts.

[Related Reading: Cultural Barriers to Communication]

**Difference in use of words**

Words can mean something different in two different languages even though the words have the same pronunciation and spelling. People do not know many languages, so the word used in some language might have a different meaning in the language the person understands. The unfamiliarity with the word might make the listener react in a bad way. The receiver might not understand the message or understand it in a way which is not intended. Sequence of use of words must also be taken care of. Technical words or jargons is also understood differently if the receiver does not have proper knowledge. For example, the word "concha" in Spanish means shell whereas in it means female sex in an offensive language in Argentina.

**Body language and gestures**

When what you speak and your body language (kinesics) is different, the listener can get offended. Inconsistent body language creates conflict. Sarcasm and contrasts make people confused or doubtful about the intentions. Action and language must always go together to make people trust you. For example, if someone requests you with a catapult posture (hands and elbows behind head) which is used to show intimidation, you will interpret the request as order and might resist doing it.

**Use of ambiguous words**

A single word can be used in various ways and they have different meanings. The meaning must be clear of all the words used in every sentence. If the meaning of a particular word can be interpreted in many ways, such a word should not be used unless there are no other alternatives. The words people choose to convey their message makes a communication effective or ineffective. Relative words like bright, love, big, small, good, bad, etc. have their meanings only when compared to or in relation to some other things. For example, "a small fish" can be interpreted as of any size. But if the word is used as "a fish smaller than a marble", then the size can be predicted properly.

**Differences in dialects**

People from different parts of the world use different dialects for the same language and pronounce a word differently. People, who speak more than one language can not speak a particular language they use less in the same way the people whose native language or mother tongue. The mothertongue or the language used most is always prominent and affects the pronunciation of other languages. Dialects or use of different words to give the same meaning according to places makes communication less effective. It causes semantic barrier as meaning of words are different. For example, the dialect of speaking English by an Australian is different than than of an American. People from Australia use the word "autumn" whereas Americans use the word "fall".

**Filtering by senders and selective perception by receivers**

Prejudices of people make them only listen to and interpret the things they want to. They always do it their way. They understand the way they want to. Similarly, the sender also sends only the information they want to. They withheld the information that they do not want the receiver to understand. Both of them use the words that serve their interest and objectives. The sender filters before sending and the receiver perceives selectively which shapes the meaning of the message. The message must be according to the level of understanding of the receiver and in the same way filtering before sending must be done. For example, a magazine which has middle aged women as target will filter their articles and will not include anything about business. That is filtering. A reader looking at the magazine will skip the articles which is not of his/her interest. That is selective perception.

Communication can be categorized into three basic types: (1) verbal communication, in which you listen to a person to understand their meaning; (2) written communication, in which you read their meaning; and (3) nonverbal communication, in which you observe a person and infer meaning. Each has its own advantages, disadvantages, and even pitfalls.

**Written Communication**

In contrast to verbal communications, written business communications are **printed messages**. Examples of written communications include memos, proposals, e-mails, letters, training manuals, and operating policies. They may be printed on paper, handwritten, or appear on the screen. Normally, a verbal communication takes place in real time. Written communication, by contrast, can be constructed over a longer period of time. Written communication is often asynchronous (occurring at different times). That is, the Sender can write a Message that the Receiver can read at any time, unlike a conversation that is carried on in real time. A written communication can also be read by many people (such as all employees in a department or all customers). It’s a “one-to-many” communication, as
opposed to a one-to-one verbal conversation. There are exceptions, of course: a voicemail is an oral Message that is asynchronous. Conference calls and speeches are oral to-many communications, and e-mails may have only one recipient or many. Most jobs involve some degree of writing. According to the National Commission on Writing, 67% of salaried employees in large American companies and professional state employees have some writing responsibility. Half of responding companies reported that they take writing into consideration when hiring professional employees, and 91% always take writing into account when hiring (for any position, not just professional-level ones).

Luckily, it is possible to learn to write clearly. Here are some tips on writing well. Thomas Jefferson summed up the rules of writing well with this idea “Don’t use two words when one will do.” One of the oldest myths in business is that writing more will make us sound more important; in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders who can communicate simply and clearly project a stronger image than those who write a lot but say nothing.

### Verbal Communication

Verbal communications in business take place over the phone or in person. The medium of the Message is oral. Let’s return to our printer cartridge example. This time, the Message is being conveyed from the Sender (the Manager) to the Receiver (an employee named Bill) by telephone. We’ve already seen how the Manager’s request to Bill (“We need to buy more printer toner cartridges”) can go awry. Now let’s look at how the same Message can travel successfully from Sender to Receiver.

Manager (speaking on the phone): “Good morning, Bill!”

(By using the employee’s name, the manager is establishing a clear, personal link to the Receiver.)

Manager: “Your division’s numbers are looking great.

(The Manager’s recognition of Bill’s role in a winning team further personalizes and emotionalizes the conversation.)

Manager: “Our next step is to order more printer toner cartridges. Could you place an order for 1,000 printer toner cartridges with Jones Computer Supplies? Our budget for this purchase is $30,000, and the cartridges need to be here by Wednesday afternoon.”

(The Manager breaks down the task into several steps. Each step consists of a specific task, time frame, quantity, or goal.)

Bill: “Sure thing! I’ll call Jones Computer Supplies and order 1,000 more printer toner cartridges, not exceeding a total of $30,000, to be here by Wednesday afternoon.”

(Bill, who is good at active listening, repeats what he has heard. This is the Feedback portion of the communication, and verbal communication has the advantage of offering opportunities for immediate feedback. Feedback helps Bill to recognize any confusion he may have had hearing the manager’s Message. Feedback also helps the manager to tell whether she has communicated the Message correctly.)

### Storytelling

Storytelling has been shown to be an effective form of verbal communication; it serves an important organizational function by helping to construct common meanings for individuals within the organization. Stories can help clarify key values and help demonstrate how things are done within an organization, and story frequency, strength, and tone are related to higher organizational commitment. The quality of the stories entrepreneurs tell is related to their ability to secure capital for their firms. Stories can serve to reinforce and perpetuate an organization’s culture, part of the organizing P-O-L-C function.

### Crucial Conversations

While the process may be the same, high-stakes communications require more planning, reflection, and skill than normal day-to-day interactions at work. Examples of high-stakes communication events include asking for a raise or presenting a business plan to a venture capitalist. In addition to these events, there are also many times in our professional lives when we have crucial conversations—discussions were not only the stakes are high but also where opinions vary and emotions run strong. One of the most consistent recommendations from communications experts is to work toward using “and” instead of “but” as you communicate under these circumstances. In addition, be aware of your communication style and practice flexibility; it is under stressful situations that communication styles can become the most rigid.

### Nonverbal Communication

What you say is a vital part of any communication. But what you don’t say can be even more important. Research also shows that 55% of in-person communication comes from nonverbal cues like facial expressions, body stance, and tone of voice. According to one study, only 7% of a Receiver’s comprehension of a Message is based on the Sender’s actual words; 38% is based on paralanguage (the tone, pace, and volume of speech), and 55% is based on nonverbal cues (body language).

Research shows that nonverbal cues can also affect whether you get a job offer. Judges examining videotapes of actual applicants were able to assess the social skills of job candidates with the sound turned off. They watched the rate of gesturing, time spent talking, and formality of dress to determine which candidates would be the most successful socially on the job. For this reason, it is important to consider how we appear in business as well as what we say. The muscles of our faces convey our emotions. We can send a silent message without saying a word. A change in facial expression can change our emotional state. Before an interview, for example, if we focus on feeling confident, our face will convey that confidence to an interviewer. Adopting a smile (even if we’re feeling stressed) can do a lot but say nothing.

To be effective communicators, we need to align our body language, appearance, and tone with the words we're trying to convey.
Unity and

In interview situations, mutual touch may register in his seat and the related sense of consciousness, which proved to influence thoughts, feelings or actions altogether or separately. There are four distinct methods of communication.

1. Face-to-Face Meeting
2. In-Person Oral Presentation
3. Online Meeting
4. Videoconferencing
5. Teleconferencing
6. Phone Call
7. Voice Message
8. Video
9. Blog
10. Report
11. Brochure
12. Newsletter
13. Flier
14. Email
15. Memo

Choosing Communication Media

When choosing a media of communication, it is important to consider who are the respective audience and the objective of the message itself. Rich media are more interactive than lean media and provide the opportunity for two-way communication: the receiver can ask questions and express opinions easily in person. To help such decision, one may roughly refer to the continuum shown below.

From Richer to Leaner:

1. Face-to-Face Meeting
2. In-Person Oral Presentation
3. Online Meeting
4. Videoconferencing
5. Teleconferencing
6. Phone Call
7. Voice Message
8. Video
9. Blog
10. Report
11. Brochure
12. Newsletter
13. Flier
14. Email
15. Memo

Subliminal method of communication

Subliminal perception refers to the individual ability to perceive and respond to stimuli that are below the threshold or level of consciousness, which proved to influence thoughts, feelings or actions altogether or separately. There are four distinct methods of communication:

- Subliminal method of communication
- Subliminal perception
- Subliminal influence
- Subliminal subconscious

These methods are used to influence people without their awareness.

Place of the emphasis | What it means
--- | ---
I did not tell John you were late. | I may have implied it.
I did not tell John you were late. | But maybe I told Sharon and José.
I did not tell John you were late. | I was talking about someone else.
I did not tell John you were late. | I told him you still are late.
I did not tell John you were late. | I told him you were attending another meeting.

Changing your tone can dramatically change your meaning.

For an example of the importance of nonverbal communication, imagine that you’re a customer interested in opening a new bank account. At one bank, the bank officer is dressed neatly. She looks you in the eye when she speaks. Her tone is friendly. Her words are easy to understand, yet she sounds professional. “Thank you for considering Bank of the East Coast. We appreciate this opportunity and would love to explore ways that we can work together to help your business grow,” she says with a friendly smile.

At the second bank, the bank officer’s tie is stained. He looks over your head and down at his desk as he speaks. He shifts in his seat and fidgets with his hands. His words say, “Thank you for considering Bank of the West Coast. We appreciate this opportunity and would love to explore ways that we can work together to help your business grow,” but he mumbles, and his voice conveys no enthusiasm or warmth.

Which bank would you choose?

The speaker’s body language must match his or her words. If a Sender’s words and body language don’t match—if a Sender smiles while telling a sad tale, for example—the mismatch between verbal and nonverbal cues can cause a Receiver to actively dislike the Sender. Here are a few examples of nonverbal cues that can support or detract from a Sender’s Message.

**Body Language** A simple rule of thumb is that simplicity, directness, and warmth convey sincerity. And sincerity is key to effective communication. A firm handshake, given with a warm, dry hand, is a great way to establish trust. A weak, clammy handshake conveys a lack of trustworthiness. Gnawing one’s lip conveys uncertainty. A direct smile conveys confidence.

**Eye Contact** In business, the style and duration of eye contact considered appropriate vary greatly across cultures. In the United States, looking someone in the eye (for about a second) is considered a sign of trustworthiness.

**Facial Expressions** The human face can produce thousands of different expressions. These expressions have been decoded by experts as corresponding to hundreds of different emotional states. Our faces convey basic information to the outside world. Happiness is associated with an upturned mouth and slightly closed eyes; fear with an open mouth and wide-eyed stare. Flitting (“shifty”) eyes and pursed lips convey a lack of trustworthiness. The effect of facial expressions in conversation is instantaneous. Our brains may register them as “a feeling” about someone’s character.

**Posture** The position of our body relative to a chair or another person is another powerful silent messenger that conveys interest, aloofness, professionalism—or lack thereof. Head up, back straight (but not rigid) implies an upright character. In interview situations, experts advise mirroring an interviewer’s tendency to lean in and settle back in her seat. The subtle repetition of the other person’s posture conveys that we are listening and responding.

**Touch** The meaning of a simple touch differs between individuals, genders, and cultures. In Mexico, when doing business, men may find themselves being grasped on the arm by another man. To pull away is seen as rude. In Indonesia, to touch anyone on the head or any part of the body is considered impolite for a woman to shake a man’s hand. In the United States, as we have noted, place great value in a firm handshake. But handshaking as a competitive sport (“the bone crusher”) can come off as needlessly aggressive, at home and abroad.

**Space** Anthropologist Edward T. Hall coined the term proxemics to denote the different kinds of distance that occur between people. These distances vary between cultures. The figure below outlines the basic proxemics of everyday life and their meaning:

- **Personal Distance**
- **Social Distance**
- **Interspersed Distance**

Standing too far away from a colleague (such as a public speaking distance of more than seven feet) or too close to a colleague (intimate distance for embracing) can thwart an effective verbal communication in business.
communicating subliminally. These are visual stimuli in movies, accelerated speech, embedded images in a print advertisement, and suggestiveness which is not normally seen at first glance. Focussing on Subliminal Communication through visual stimuli, Marketing people have adopted this method even incorporating it films and television shows. Subliminal method of communication first made its debut in a 1957 advertisement, during which a brief message flashed, telling viewers to eat popcorn and drink Coca-Cola. Since that time, subliminal communication has occupied a controversial role in the advertising landscape, with some people claiming it's omnipresent, while others emphasize it's not real. As of publication, there is still an ongoing scientific debate about whether subliminal advertising works. Subliminal messaging is a form of advertising in which a subtle message is inserted into a standard ad. This subtle message affects the consumer's behavior, but the consumer does not know she's seen the message. For example, a marketer might incorporate a single frame telling consumers to drink tea in a movie. In print media, advertisers might put hidden images or coded messages into a text.

**Arguments for Effectiveness**

A 2009 study at the University College of London found that people were especially likely to be affected by negative subliminal communication. For example, a cosmetic advertisement conveying to a consumer that she is ugly might be more effective. Subliminal ads "prime" the brain to seek out stimuli that match the message in the advertisement, according to a 1992 study published in "Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin." This can affect behavior, particularly when a message addresses an individual's insecurities or behavioral tendencies and when a consumer is in a context that allows her to act on the ad's message.

**Business letter**

A *business letter* is usually a letter from one company to another, or between such organizations and their customers, clients and other external parties. The overall style of letter depends on the relationship between the parties concerned. Business letters can have many types of contents, for example to request direct information or action from another party, to order supplies from a supplier, to point out a mistake by the letter's recipient, to reply directly to a request, to apologize for a wrong, or to convey goodwill. A business letter is sometimes useful because it produces a permanent written record, and may be taken more seriously by the recipient than other forms of communication.

**General format**

**Margins** Side, top and bottom margins should be 1 to 1 1/4 inches (the general default settings in programs such as Microsoft Word). One-page letters and memos should be vertically centered.

**Font formatting** No special character or font formatting is used, except for the subject line, which is usually underlined.

**Punctuation** The salutation or greeting is generally followed by a comma in British style, whereas in the United States a colon is used. The valediction or closing is followed by a comma.

**Form** The following is the general format, excluding indentation used in various formats:

```
[SENDER'S COMPANY NAME]
[SENDER'S ADDRESS (optional if placed at bottom)]
[SENDER'S PHONE]
[SENDER'S E-MAIL (optional)]

[DATE]

[RECIPIENT W/O PREFIX]
[RECIPIENT'S COMPANY]
[RECIPIENT'S ADDRESS]

(Optional) Attention [DEPARTMENT/PERSON]

Dear [RECIPIENT W/ PREFIX]
[First Salutation then Subject in Business letters]

[CONTENT]

[CONTENT]

[COMPLIMENTARY CLOSING (Sincerely, Respectfully, Regards, etc.])

[SENDER]
[SENDER'S TITLE]
[SENDER'S ADDRESS (optional if placed at top)]

Enclosures ([NUMBER OF ENCLOSURES])
```

**Indentation formats** Business letters conform to generally one of six indentation formats: standard, open, block, semi-block, modified block, and modified semi-block. Put simply, "semi-" means that the first lines of paragraphs are indented; "modified" means that the sender's address, date, and closing are significantly indented.

**Standard** The standard-format letter uses a colon after the salutation and a comma after the complimentary closing.

**Open** The open-format letter does not use punctuation after the salutation and no punctuation after the complimentary closing.

**Block** In a block-format letter, all text is left aligned and paragraphs are not indented.

**Semi-block** In a semi-block format letter, all text is left aligned, paragraphs are indented, and paragraphs are separated by double or triple spacing.

**Modified block** In a modified-block format letter, all text is left aligned (except the author’s address, date, and closing), paragraphs are not indented, and the author’s address, date, and closing begin at the center point.
The Purposes of Business Letters

One purpose of a business letter is to update customers on company products. Business letters can be written to employees or managers, as well as clients and prospective customers. The business letter is a formal type of communication that is usually typed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch white stationery paper. Business letters must be targeted to a specific individual or group, have a clear and concise purpose, be convincing and end with a specific objective, like a meeting date.

Sales Efforts

The purpose of a business letter can include introducing customers to new products. In direct mail, a form of advertising, these letters are called sales letters. The sales letter is usually mailed with a brochure and order form. While the color brochure often features a company's products, the sales letter is designed to highlight the key benefits of the products for the consumer or business customer. All introductory or sales letters must follow the AIDA (attention, interest, desire, action) principle, according to businessballs.com. The heading or letter should grab the reader's attention, interest them enough to read it, increase their desire to own the product, and prompt them to purchase it.

Relationship Building

Purposes of business letters also include appraising or thanking business associates or customers. For example, a cover letter sent with a report can apprise business associates about the contents of the report. These letters are often very short, with bullet points highlighting key topics discussed in the report. Thank you letters can be used by companies to thank customers for a recent order. The objective of the thank you letter is to build rapport with the customer, and remind them of the company's products or website. Another purpose of a business letter is to order products. This type of letter usually takes the form a purchase order. The purchase order is a contract between the buyer and seller that states the quantity and dollar amount of a specific order.

Selling Incentive Sales

The purposes of business letters can include providing sales incentives for customers. Selling incentive sales letters are used to offer rebates, coupons or special deals to long-term customers. For example, a small printing company may offer a 20 percent discount to customers who have used their services for six months or longer. An alternative would be to offer the discount to customers who spend a certain dollar amount with the printer. Companies typically use selling incentive sales letters to promote existing products.

Prevention/Solution

Sometimes, a business must write a letter to acknowledge a complaint. This complaint could involve a customer service issue, damaged product or even an inaccurate shipment. Consequently, the company must write a letter to the customer that informs them what is being done to correct the error. Complaints can lead to potential legal problems. Therefore, it is important for companies to address customer complaints immediately.

Considerations

Finally, a company may write a business to a “lost customer” or someone who has not purchased products for a while, according to the Austin Business Journal. Internet, mail order and retail companies that use databases often have the ability to pinpoint these customers. Subsequently, they may write to these customers and offer them a special deal. For example, a small cell phone company may send letters to customers who have cancelled their service introducing a new monthly rate that is lower than their competition.

Importance of Letters in Communication

Letters are an important type of communication that is usually typed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch white stationery paper. Business letters must be targeted to a specific individual or group, have a clear and concise purpose, be convincing and end with a specific objective, like a meeting date.
A traditional and still often used method of communication in the business world is letters. Contrary to popular belief, letter writing is not a lost art, but a viable tool in today's corporate society. Small businesses need to take advantage of this valuable asset when creating promotions, addressing concerns, announcing positions and seeking aid.

**Definition** Business letters are a formal means of communication. They have a set format followed by writers and recognized by readers. They include the date and address of both the sender and recipient. They provide a professional record of correspondence that can be kept indefinitely. Business letters are generally printed on company stationery and are hand-signed by the author. They are most often sent through a postal service, though they can be hand-delivered. While some consider letter writing a lost art, it remains an important medium of doing business all over the world.

**Purposes** There are many reasons for creating and sending business letters. People develop sales letters, business proposals and invitations to functions to send to associates. Other reasons for this type of correspondence include letters of introduction, requests for approval and funding, appreciation for services and appeals for credit. There are also business letters that provide a formal means of rejecting job applicants or proposals. Business letters are typically used when informal methods such as electronic mail or phone calls are too casual for the situation.

**Effects** The effects that various business letters can have on their audience are as varied as their purposes. For instance, many letters are written to persuade someone to do something, such as a sales pitch advertising a new product or service that a small business has to offer. Letters also can call people to action. For instance, a company leader might draft a piece of correspondence meant to inspire her employees to meet a particular business goal for the year. Other letters are meant to instruct by explaining a particular process.

**Personal Medium** Communication through letters is a personal act even when the writings are formal with a business propose. These pieces are generally addressed to a specific person to provide information or make an appeal. The writer speaks directly to his audience in a thoughtful and organized manner. The tone is respectful and often inviting and encouraging. Sensitive matters can be dealt with in a private business letter that allows for tact and empathy. This personal way of communicating allows for the reader to think before responding, unlike a phone call or face-to-face meeting.

### How to Write a Business Report for English Learners

If you would like to learn how to write a business report in English follow these tips and use the example report as a template on which to base your own business report. First of all, business reports provide important information for management that is timely and factual. **English learners** writing business reports need to make sure that the language is precise and concise. The writing style used for business reports should present information without strong opinions, but rather as direct and accurately as possible.

**Linking language** should be used to connect ideas and sections of the business report. This example business report presents the four essentials that every business report should include:

- **Terms of Reference** Terms of reference refer to the terms on which the business report is written.
- **Procedure** The procedure describe the method that was used to collect data for the report.
- **Findings** The findings describe the data or other important information the report produced.
- **Conclusions** Conclusions are drawn on the findings which provide reasons for recommendations.
- **Recommendations** The recommendations are specific suggestions made based on the conclusions of the report.

#### Reports: Example Report

**Terms of Reference** Margaret Anderson, Director of Personnel has requested this report on employee benefits satisfaction. The report was to be submitted to her by 28 June.

**Procedure** A representative selection of 15% of all employees were interviewed in the period between April 1st and April 15th concerning:

1. Overall satisfaction with our current benefits package
2. Problems encountered when dealing with the personnel department
3. Suggestions for the improvement of communication policies
4. Problems encountered when dealing with our HMO

**Findings**

1. Employees were generally satisfied with the current benefits package.
2. Some problems were encountered when requesting vacation due to what is perceived as long approval waiting periods.
3. Older employees repeatedly had problems with HMO prescription drugs procedures.
4. Employees between the ages of 22 and 30 report few problems with HMO.
5. Most employees complain about the lack of dental insurance in our benefits package.
6. The most common suggestion for improvement was for the ability to process benefits requests online.

**Conclusions**

1. Older employees, those over 50, are having serious problems with our HMO's ability to provide prescription drugs.
2. Our benefits request system needs to be revised as most complaints concerning in-house processing.
3. Improvements need to take place in personnel department response time.
4. Information technology improvements should be considered as employees become more technologically savvy.

**Recommendations**

1. Meet with HMO representatives to discuss the serious nature of complaints concerning prescription drug benefits for older employees.
2. Give priority to vacation request response time as employees need faster approval in order to be able to plan their vacations.
3. Take no special actions for the benefits package of younger employees.
4. Discuss the possibility of adding an online benefits requests system to our company Intranet.

**Important Points to Remember**

- **Terms of Reference** - This section gives background information on the reason for the report. It usually includes the person requesting the report.
- **Procedure** - The procedure provides the exact steps taken and methods used for the report.
- **Findings** - The findings point out discoveries made during the course of the report investigation.
Oral Communication: Definition, Types & Advantages

Definition and Types
Great communication skills are your ticket to success in the academic and business world. But have you ever been overcome by fear or anxiety prior to going on a job interview or speaking in front of an audience? Knowing when to choose oral communication and polishing your speaking skills can help you at every stage of your career.

Oral communication is the process of verbally transmitting information and ideas from one individual or group to another. Oral communication can be either Formal or Informal. Examples of informal oral communication include:

- Face-to-face conversations
- Telephone conversations
- Presentations at business meetings
- Classroom lectures

More formal types of oral communication include:

- Discussions that take place at business meetings
- Commencement speech given at a graduation ceremony

With advances in technology, new forms of oral communication continue to develop. Video Phones and Video Conferences combine audio and video so that workers in distant locations can both see and speak with each other. Other modern forms of oral communication include Podcasts (audio clips that you can access on the Internet) and Voiceover Internet Protocol (VoIP), which allows callers to communicate over the Internet and avoid telephone charges. Skype is an example of VoIP.

Advantages

There are many situations in which it makes sense to choose oral over written communication. Oral communication is more personal and less formal than written communication. If time is limited and a business matter requires quick resolution, it may be best to have a face-to-face or telephone conversation. There is also more flexibility in oral communication; you can discuss different aspects of an issue and make decisions more quickly than you can in writing. Oral communication can be especially effective in addressing conflicts or problems. Talking things over is often the best way to settle disagreements or misunderstandings. Finally, oral communication is a great way to promote employee morale and maintain energy and enthusiasm within a team.

Disadvantages

Despite the many benefits of oral communication, there are times when written communication is more effective. For example, you may want to exchange important information that needs to be documented using written communication. A lot of transactions in the business world require some type of written record, and you will find that even strong verbal skills are not a substitute for putting things in writing. Additionally, oral communication tends to be less detailed and more subject to misunderstanding than written communication. It’s best to always think carefully about which method of communication best fits your objective.

Designing Effective Oral Presentations

Studies to determine kinds of communications most often required of employees indicate that the ability to speak effectively is as crucial as the ability to write effectively. Since 1979, studies focusing on employee communication have indicated the increasing importance of oral communication.

During a routine week, Employees will actually spend more time speaking than writing; using the phone; conversing informally with colleagues, subordinates, and superiors on routine office topics; conducting meetings; working in problem solving groups; conducting employee evaluation sessions; participating in teleconferences and sales presentation; and frequently becoming involved in formal speaking situations before groups inside and outside the organization. Communication research also reveals that the higher an employee moves in an organization, the more important speaking skills become.

The purpose of this segment is to provide you the basic strategies for presenting technical and business information in an oral presentation. You will see that developing the effective written document and the effective oral presentation use many of the same strategies and techniques. Understanding similarities between writing and speaking can be helpful for several reasons. Many times, you will be asked to document an oral presentation you have given; that is, you must submit what you said in written form. Or, you may be asked to make an oral presentation of a written document.

Understanding the Speaking/Writing Relationship

Being an effective speaker and an effective writer requires you to

- Analyze your audience,
- Understand and articulate your purpose clearly,
- Develop sufficient and appropriate supporting material,
- Organize the material into a framework that is easy for the audience to follow
- Choose a speaking style level of language, approach to the subject, and tone suitable to your role as well as your audience and purpose
- Understand the context in which your presentation will be received,
- Select graphics that will enhance your presentation and your audience’s understanding of your message.

As you can see, many of the concepts covered in your text and in Segments 1 and 3 can be applied directly to the oral presentation. Because listening is a different processing method than reading, you will need to know how to adapt guidelines for organization, style, and graphics to fit the speaking situation. However, you will see that writing and speaking are, nevertheless, similar communication activities.

Analyzing the Audience

22/BAJRANG KUCHAMAN/ BL7665843205@OUTLOOK.COM/ MBA NOTES/BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Conclusions

The conclusions provide logical conclusions based on the findings.

Recommendations

The recommendations state actions that the writer of the report feels need to be taken based on the findings and conclusions.

Reports should be concise and factual. Opinions are given in the “conclusions” section. However, these opinions should be based on facts presented in the “findings”.

Use simple tenses (usually the present simple) to express facts.

Use the imperative form (Discuss the possibility ..., Give priority ..., etc.) in the “recommendations” section as these apply to the company as a whole.

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Analyzing the Audience
Just as the success of the written communication is determined by the reader, the success of the oral presentation is determined by the audience. Writing is successful if the reader responds the way you desire: the reader is informed, persuaded, or instructed as you intend and then responds the way you want and in such a way that good will is maintained between you and the reader.

The oral presentation is successful if the audience reacts in the way you wish them to react: their response indicates that they are informed, persuaded, or instructed by your message and that they respond favorably to what you have said. However, just as writing effectively depends on your understanding your reader(s) as thoroughly as possible, effective speaking also depends on your understanding your listener(s).

- You cannot speak or write effectively to anyone without first understanding their perspective.
- You must know how your audience will likely respond based on
  - their educational and cultural background,
  - their technical expertise,
- their knowledge of the subject,
  - their position in the organization.

In designing both the oral presentation and the written presentation, what you say, if it is to achieve your purpose for communicating, must be presented in such a way that your audience can understand you and will react as you wish.

When you analyze your audience, you must focus on their professional profile; but you must also focus on your audience as human beings who react emotionally to you, your topic, your message, and even the context in which the communication occurs. The results of this analysis then suggest what you should say or write, what you should not say, and the tone you should use.

Therefore, as you consider the audience you will address, you will need to answer each of the following questions as carefully as possible:

- How much does my audience know about the subject?
- How much do they know about me?
- What do they expect from me?
- How interested will they be in what I say?
- What is their attitude toward me?
- What is their attitude toward my subject?
- What is their age group?
- How much do they know about me?
- How much does my audience know about the subject?
- What positions do they occupy in the organization?
- What is their educational background?
- What is their cultural/ethnic background?
- What is their economic background?
- What are their political and religious views?
- What kinds of cultural biases will they likely have toward me and my topic?
- How much does my audience know about the subject?
- What positions do they occupy in the organization?
- What is their educational background?
- What is their cultural/ethnic background?
- What is their economic background?
- What are their political and religious views?
- What kinds of cultural biases will they likely have toward me and my topic?

In viewing this list, you will note the prevalence of questions on attitude—the audience's attitude toward you as well as the subject. These questions are particularly crucial ones, as you need to know, before you begin planning your presentation, if your audience will consider you trustworthy and credible. Will they accept what you say, or will you have to establish an empathy between you and the audience before they can really "listen" and comprehend what you say? To be an effective speaker, you must know your audience, establish an effective relationship between you and them by being sincere and knowledgeable about the subject, then conform to their expectations about dress, demeanor, choice of language, and attitude toward them and the topic.

When you speak to people from other countries, you should plan to do research on the culture of that country. Be aware that hand gestures you use routinely with US audiences may have different meanings in other cultures. Also, the clothing you choose to wear should also be selected with the culture of the audience in mind.

**Determining the Goal of Your Presentation**

Oral presentations, like written presentations, must be designed around a specific purpose. As a writer and a speaker, you must know your purpose. Then, based on your analysis of your audience, you must then conceive your purposes in terms of your audience's perspective. Like the report or letter, the oral presentation must make purpose clearly evident at the beginning so that the audience knows what you are going to do in the presentation and how to listen to what you are saying. By knowing what they will be hearing from the beginning of the presentation, they can more easily focus their attention on the content presented.

**In short, know your goal in your presentation; as you plan, state your goal in one sentence.** Then, as you begin your presentation, state your goal in terms of your audience's background and attitude; announce your purpose early in the presentation to prepare your audience for the main ideas to come.

But as written communications often have multiple purposes, so may oral presentations have multiple purposes. The main purpose of your presentation may be to report the status of a project, to summarize a problem, to describe a plan, to propose an action, but your long-range objective may be to highlight or document important specific issues within the topic about which you are speaking and to further establish your credibility within the organization.

**Oral presentations, like written presentations, can enhance an employee's reputation within an organization. Therefore, consider every speaking opportunity an opportunity to sell not only your ideas but also your competence, your value to the organization.**

**Choosing and Shaping Content**

Preparing the oral presentation often requires the same kind of research needed for the written report. To achieve your goal, you will need to determine what information you will need. You will also want to choose information that will appeal to your audience—particularly their attitudes, interests, and prejudices toward the topic.

In selecting content, consider a variety of information types: statistics, testimony, cases, illustrations, history, and particularly narratives that help convey the goal you have for your presentation.

Because listening is more difficult than reading, narratives can be particularly effective in retaining the attention of your listeners. While statistics and data are often necessary in building your argument, narratives interspersed with data provide an important change of pace needed to keep your listeners attentive.

In short, vary your content, but be sure that every item you include pertains to the goal of your presentation.

**Analyzing the Context**

Analysis of context is often difficult to separate from analysis of audience; in a sense, context is one facet of the larger issue of audience. In analyzing context, you need to know why your presentation is required.

- What is the broader concern underlying the need for the presentation?
- What primary issues underlie the presentation?
- What does your presentation relate to these issues?
- What will be happening in the organization when you make your presentation?
- How does your presentation fit into the organizational situation?
- If you are one of several speakers, what kinds of presentations will the other speakers be making?
In what surroundings will you be making the presentation?
For example, delivering a presentation at a regular meeting of project directors is different from making a presentation to stockholders or the board of directors of the organization. Making a presentation at a company picnic is different from delivering a presentation at the annual meeting of a professional society whose focus is on current issues in a discipline.
Thus, knowing the **context** is as important as knowing your audience and your purpose. In many cases, **context** will be inextricably bound up with questions of audience attitude and the way you shape your purpose. Audience attitude frequently results from **contextual** problems or current issues within the organization, and what you can or should say in your presentation, your purpose and the content you choose to present may be dictated by the **context** surrounding your presentation and the perspective that your audience brings.

**Choosing the Organization**  
Like written communications, oral presentations must be organized with your audience's needs and perspective in mind.

- **Is your audience interested in what you will say?**
- **Based on your purpose and needs and expectations of audience, in what order should you present these ideas?**

*Answers to these questions will help you decide how to go about organizing your presentation. Generally, however, like the written presentation, oral presentations have an introduction, a main body, and a conclusion.*

The introduction should clearly tell the audience what the presentation will cover so that the audience is prepared for what is to come. The body should develop each point stated in the introduction.

The conclusion should reiterate the ideas presented and reinforce the purpose of the presentation.

**Getting Your Ideas in Order**
While you are doing your research and collecting content for your presentation, you should begin to organize your information. Divide your content into main categories of ideas:

Once you have the main content "chunks" or divisions, then begin to subdivide each main idea. Order the subdivisions so that the information moves in a logical sequence:

In planning your **introduction**, be sure that you state your goal near the beginning. Even if you use some type of opening statement to interest your audience, state the goal of your presentation next. Then, state how you will proceed in your presentation: what main issues you will discuss. The main ideas you have developed during the research and content planning stage should be announced here.

The **conclusion** to the presentation is often difficult. At a minimum, you should restate the main issues you want your audience to remember, but do so in a concise way. Nothing is worse than a conclusion that doesn't conclude! Try to find a concluding narrative or statement that will have an impact on your audience. The conclusion should not be long, but it should leave the audience with a positive feeling about you and your ideas.

**Choosing an Appropriate Speaking Style**
How you sound when you speak is crucial to the success of your presentation. You may have effective content, excellent ideas, accurate supporting statistics. However, if the style you use in speaking is inappropriate to the occasion, to the audience (as individuals and as employees in a particular part of the organization), and to the purpose your are trying to achieve, you content will more than likely be ineffective.

As in planning your written communication, you want to avoid sounding patronizing, rude, overly solicitous, gushing and insincere.

The most effective style is usually a **conversational style**: short sentences, concrete language, speech that suggests to your audience that you are really talking to them.

When a speaker writes the entire speech and memorizes it, the result is often a pompous, laborious style: the presentation does not sound as if the speaker is talking naturally to the audience but reading aloud.

In short, your presentation should sound natural, as if you are talking to each person in the room.

Choosing the appropriate style will help you achieve your purpose, but tone and degree of formality will be dictated by your organizational role and your relationship to your audience.

- **Do they know you?**
- **Is your rank in the organization above or below them?**
- **Are you speaking to an audience of individuals from all levels within the organization?**
- **What demeanor, approach, and level of formality does the organization usually expect from those giving oral presentation?**
- **Is the audience composed of people who understand English? How well do they understand English?**

Answers to these questions as well as your purpose will determine the style--how you speak to your audience. If you are speaking before a group that is composed largely of people from another country, you need to determine beforehand how fluent they are in English. If they are not comfortable with English, be sure that you speak slowly; avoid idiomatic expressions; choose concrete words; and speak in relatively short sentences. Limit each sentence to one idea.

**Choosing Visual Aids to Enhance Your Purpose and Your Meaning**
Because we live in a time when communication is visual and verbal, visual aids are as important to oral communication as they are to written communication.

Visual aids are valuable in a number of ways:

- they help your audience understand your ideas;
- they help the audience follow your arguments [your "train" of thought] and remain attentive; and
- they can help your audience remember what you said.

In addition, the presentation that uses visual aids effectively is more persuasive, more professional, and more interesting. Many of the guidelines for using visual aids in oral presentation mirror those for written documents: they need to fit the needs of the audience; they must be simple; they must be clear and easy to understand.

**How many visual aids?**
Some kinds of oral presentations will require one kind of visual aid; presentations conveying complex information may require several kinds of visual aids. The point, quite simply, is that listeners are as resistant to an unbroken barrage of words as readers are to unbroken pages of prose. Thus, many of the guidelines for visual aids discussed in Chapter 15 also apply to oral presentations.

You can use...
drawings graphs, props and objects, a blackboard with an outline, charts, demonstrations pictures, statistics, cartoons photographs, and even "interesting" items or maybe a map. Use anything that will help people SEE what you MEAN! (Weren't you attracted to the icons above???)

But these will be seen while the audience is listening to you, you will need to be sure that all visuals are as simple as possible and as easy to read: In short,

- Avoid too much information on any single visual.
- Use boldface type in a font size that can be easily read (Figure 1).
- Use sans serif type because if produces a sharper image for slides and transparencies (Figure 1).
- Limit the fonts you use to two per visual (Figure 1).
- Avoid making your audience study your aids. If they are busy trying to decipher your visual aid, they will not be listening to you. People cannot listen and see at the same time.

Bar graphs, circle graphs, simple diagrams, pictures, and lists are standard types of visual aids. Whatever aid you decide to use, limit the aid to only the concept, data, or point you are trying to make.

- Be sure that what the visual says is immediately evident.

Computer graphics and programs such as Harvard Graphics, Powerpoint, and Excell in combination with color printers and slide projection equipment give you the opportunity to experiment with graphic design to develop visual aids that are visually pleasing as well as clear. For example, Figure 1 was generated with Powerpoint. Figure 2 was generated with Excell and transported into Powerpoint. Both visuals are accessible. The graph is clearly labeled: it has a title; the x- and y-axes are labeled as are the quantities measured by the bars. The source of the graphic is also given. Remember: any time you use any material, particularly data, that is not yours, you must give credit to the source from which you have selected the data.

- Use technology whenever possible.

Technology allows speakers to download graphs, drawings, and figures from the World Wide Web. The Web is perhaps one of the richest, newest, most colorful sources of visual aids.

Figure 3 shows a graphic of nitrogen oxide emission trends from the EPA web site, downloaded via Netscape through Yahoo.
Figure 4 shows data on Angolan Oil research downloaded from Texas A&M University's Geochemical & Environmental Research Group:.
Figure 5 shows a graphic of Alcohol and Marijuana Use in the United States for April 1994. Most of these graphics have tables that accompany them. So, if you need hard data, it's there!

Many presentation rooms now have ethernet connections and even computers that have the appropriate software to run Netscape. Thus, when the computer is connected to an overhead projector, Web images can be shown on a screen. Because of the increasingly rich range of materials available on the World Wide Web, resources needed to enhance any oral presentations are almost limitless. Even if the room in which you will give a presentation does not have ethernet connections, you can still print Web materials via a color copier onto paper or transparency masters.

Planning Your Presentation--Questions You Need to Ask

Thus, when you learn that you are to give an oral presentation, the first step in preparing for the presentation is to analyze each point listed above by answering the following questions, just as you did in planning your written communication. Once you have done so, you are ready to design, structure, and organize your presentation so that it will effectively satisfy the constraints that arise from your consideration of each point.

Audience
- Who is my audience?
- What do I know about my audience's background, knowledge, position in the organization, attitudes toward me and my subject?

Purpose
- What is my purpose in giving this oral presentation?
- Is there (should there be) a long-range purpose?
- Given my audience's background and attitudes, do I need to reshape my purpose to make my presentation more acceptable to my audience?

Context
- Where will I be speaking?
- What events will be transpiring in the organization (theirs or mine) that may affect how my audience perceives what I say?

Content
- What ideas do I want to include and not include?
- Based on the audience and the context, what difficulties do I need to anticipate in choosing content?
- Can any ideas be misconstrued and prove harmful to me or my organization?

Graphics
- What kinds of visual aids will I need to enhance the ideas I will present?
- Where should I use these in my presentation?

Style
- What kind of tone do I want to use in addressing my audience?
- What kind of image of myself and my organization do I want to project?
- What level of language do I need to use, based on my audience's background and knowledge of my subject?
- What approach will my audience expect from me?
- How formal should I be?

Designing Each Segment
The structure of the oral presentation is crucial for one main reason: once you have articulated a statement, the audience cannot "rehear" what you have said. In reading, when you do not understand a sentence or paragraph, you can stop and reread the passage as many times as necessary. When you are speaking, however, the audience must be able to follow your meaning and understand it without having to stop and consider a particular point you have made, thereby missing later statements that you make as you move through your
presentation. To help your audience follow what you say easily, you must design your presentation with your audience, particularly their listening limitations, in mind. Audiences generally do not enjoy long presentations. Listening is difficult, and audiences will tire even when a presentation is utterly smashing. For that reason, as you design your presentation and select content, look for ways to keep your message as concise as possible. Don’t omit information your audience needs, but look for ways to eliminate non essential material. Again, without carefully analyzing your audience’s attitude toward the subject, the background, knowledge of the topic, their perspective toward you, you cannot begin to make accurate decisions regarding either content or design and structure of your presentation.

Choose an Interesting Title
The effective presentation requires you to focus your audience’s attention on what you are saying. A good way to grab your audience’s attention is to develop a title that, at the very least, reflects the content of your presentation but does so in an interesting way. Like the title of a formal report or the subject line in a letter, memo, or informal report, the title of an oral presentation should prepare your audience for the content you will present. Therefore, from the beginning of the presentation, your audience is prepared for what you will say.

Develop Your Presentation about Three Main Divisions
Helping your audience follow your message easily requires that you build into your structure a certain amount of redundancy. That means that you reiterate main points. When you divide your presentation into an introduction, the main body, and the conclusion, you are building in this necessary redundancy.

- In the introduction, you “tell them what you want them to know,”
- In the main body, you “tell them”; and
- In the conclusion, you “tell them what you told them.”

This kind of deliberate repetition helps your audience follow and remember the main points you are making. (Readers can "reread" text, but listeners cannot "rehear" oral remarks.) To design your presentation with planned repetition, you must clearly know your purpose and what you want your audience to know.

Help Your Audience WANT to Listen
You may also wish to introduce your topic with an attention-getting device: a startling fact, a relevant anecdote, a rhetorical question, or a statement designed to arouse your audience's interest. Again, the device you choose will depend on the audience, the occasion, the purpose of the presentation.

Or, if your audience is not readily familiar with the subject, you may want to include background material to help them grasp and process your main points, a technique Katheryn uses. As you see from the outline of her introduction, she does not explain the significance of the title of her presentation until she has described her background and prepares to introduce the topics she will discuss.

But in any introduction, once you have introduced your topic, you need to establish your purpose in the presentation and then tell your audience how you plan to structure your presentation. As Katheryn does, tell your audience what points or topics you plan to cover so that your audience can sense and then follow the direction of your statements.

An Important Note:
In introducing the topic and preparing the audience to understand the ideas you will present, you also have three concerns:

(1) The way the introduction is designed, the presentation of the topic, the purpose, the background, and the plan must motivate the audience to listen receptively; and

(2) They must want to listen because you convince them that you have credibility. Because most people's attention span will be limited, you want to be sure that your introduction makes clear why they should listen. Thus, you must be sure that your frame your purpose with the audience’s perception of you and the topic.

(3) Your audience will not listen—unless you have credibility. If your analysis of your audience and the situation in which you will be speaking indicates that you must establish credibility with your audience, then you may need to include in the design of your introduction a number of strategies:

- Acknowledge that you perceive the problem that your audience has with you or your topic.
- Establish a common ground with the audience, points of agreement.
- Attempt to refute (if you can do so efficiently) erroneous assumptions that you believe the audience will have toward you or the subject.
- Ask the audience to allow you the opportunity to present your information as objectively as possible.
- In designing your introduction, remember that much of the success of the presentation rests of your ability to make your audience want to listen and to prepare them to follow and to understand what you say.

Design the Body
In the introduction you state the main issues or topics you plan to present. Thus, in designing the body of the presentation, you develop what you want to say about each of these main points or ideas. You may want to present your ideas in a chronological sequence, a logical sequence, or a simple topical sequence. This method will help your audience follow your ideas if you are giving an informative speech, an analytical speech, or a persuasive speech. The important point, however, is that you need to demarcate and announce each point in the body as you come to it so that your audience knows when you have completed one point and begun another. Note how Katheryn demarcates the beginning of each point in her presentation:

Design the Conclusion
The conclusion reinforces the main ideas you wish your audience to retain. Remember: in the introduction, you “tell them what you will tell them”; in the body, you “tell them”; and in the conclusion, you “tell them what you told them.” In a presentation which has covered numerous points, you should be sure to reemphasize the main points. But the conclusion also allows you to emphasize the importance of specific ideas, or you can reiterate the value to the ideas you have presented. In short, how you design the conclusion will depend on your initial purpose. A strong conclusion is nearly as important as a strong introduction, as both the beginning and the end will be the parts most likely remembered.

As you can see from the partial outline of Katheryn's presentation, she uses the conclusion to emphasizes the changes she is advocating in the engineering curriculum and to explain their significance to the successful engineer.

Choose an Effective Delivery Style
Style in writing refers basically to your choice of words, the length and structure of your sentences, and the tone, or attitude you express toward your audience. Style in delivering oral presentations is also defined by these same characteristics plus many nonverbal cues that can either enhance or detract from your presentation. While the style you use will vary with the audience, topic, and context, always consider the following guidelines that can enhance your delivery style:

- Avoid speaking in a "written" style. Use phrases, and use a variety of sentence lengths. Avoid excessively long, complex sentences, as listeners may have difficulty following your ideas. In general, keep your sentences short. Speak as if you were talking to your audience. If you concentrate on getting your point across by having a conversation with the audience, you will likely use a natural, conversational style. Many suggestions for clarity in writing also apply to clarity in speaking:
  - Avoid long, cumbersome sentences. Long sentences can be as hard to hear as they are to read.
  - Avoid overuse of abstract, polysyllabic words. Instead, use concrete language that your audience can visualize.
  - Avoid overuse of jargon, unless you are sure that your audience will be readily familiar with all specialized terms.
- Use sentences that follow natural speech patterns.
- Use short, active voice sentences.

**Use Techniques to Enhance Audience Comprehension**

Because your audience cannot "rehear" ideas, once you have stated them, look for ways to help your audience easily follow your ideas:

- Be sure you clearly demarcate the beginning and end of each point and segment of your presentation:
- Announce each main topic as you come to it. That way, your audience knows when you have completed one topic and are beginning the next one.
- Allow a slight pause to occur after you have completed your introduction, then announce your first topic.
- After completing your final topic in the main body of your presentation, allow a slight pause before you begin your conclusion.
- Speak slowly, vigorously, and enthusiastically. Be sure you enunciate your words carefully, particularly if you are addressing a large group.
- Use gestures to accentuate points. Move your body deliberately to aid you in announcing major transition points. In short, avoid standing transfixed before your audience.
- Maintain eye contact with your audience. Doing so helps you keep your listeners involved in what you are saying. If you look at the ceiling, the floor, the corners of the room, your audience may sense a lack of self-confidence. Lack of eye contact also tends to lessen your credibility. In contrast, consistent eye contact enhances the importance of the message. By looking at your audience, you can often sense their reaction to what you are saying and make adjustments in your presentation if necessary.
- Do not memorize your presentation, and do not write your presentation. Otherwise, your speech will sound as if you are reading it. Use brief notes, written on one page, if possible. Use colored pens to highlight points. Avoid note cards and several pages of notes. If you suddenly forget what you are trying to say, and if you have several pages of notes, you can easily lose track of where you are in your notes. If possible, type the outline of your presentation on one sheet of paper. If you do forget what you are going to say, a quick glance will usually refresh your memory.
- Rehearse your presentation until you are comfortable. Try walking around, speaking each segment and then speaking aloud the entire presentation. Rephrase ideas that are difficult for you to say--these will likely be hard for your audience to follow. Be sure to time your presentation so that it does not exceed the time limit. Keep your presentation as short as possible. Therefore, avoid adding information to your presentation (and your outline) as your rehearse.
- If possible, record your speech. Listen to what you have said as objectively as possible. As you listen, consider the main issues of audience, purpose, organization, context, content, and style.
- Listen for tone, attitude, and clarity. Is the tone you project appropriate for your audience and your purpose? Is each sentence easy to understand? Are you speaking too rapidly? Are the major divisions in your presentation easy to hear? Are any sentences difficult to understand?
- If possible, become familiar with the room where you will give the presentation so that you will have some sense about how loudly you should talk and how people will be seated.
- Try not to provide the audience handout material before you begin. To do so encourages your audience to read rather than listen. If you must provide written material, be sure the material is coordinated with your presentation. That way, you have a better chance of keeping your audience's attention on what you are saying. In routine business presentations, you may wish to provide your audience with a short outline of your presentation. Be sure to include in the outline the main points you want to stress. This kind of outline helps your audience follow your train of thought.

**Figure 6. This is an example of a speech outline.**

Note that it begins with the title and the speaker name, title, and affiliation. Each point is highlighted, and the main subpoints briefly listed. The outline also indicates where graphics will be inserted, and the author leaves space where listeners can take notes. If you plan to give your audience extensive "notes" or documentation, do so after you have concluded your presentation. Otherwise, many people will be reading the package and not listening to you. When you are planning your presentation, determine how you will handle questions. In many types of public presentations, questions may not be an issue, but during oral reports, such as status reports, project reports, and proposals, you can expect your audience to have questions. Thus, as you plan your presentation think of questions they may ask and decide how you will handle these.

**Use Visual Aids Whenever Possible**

Any oral presentation will be enhanced by visual aids. Research has shown that oral presentations that use visuals are more persuasive, more interesting, more credible, and more professional--i.e., more effective--that presentations without aids. Particularly if your presentation is long--20 minutes or more--visual aids can help your audience follow your ideas easily and with fewer lapses in attention. In addition to the points made in the last section, a few guidelines need consideration:

- You can use visual aids to announce each main point as you begin discussion of that point. You can also use visual aids to accentuate and illuminate important ideas. However, the message that the visual carries should be immediately apparent. If the audience has to study the visual to interpret its mean, they will not be listening to you.
If you don’t really need formal visual aids, you may want to write the outline for the main body of your presentation on a board or use a transparency to let your audience see your plan and trace your movement from one section of your presentation to another. In both oral and written presentations, readers/listeners must perceive the pattern of organization to comprehend effectively (Figure 6A).

In presentations where you do need visual aids, use bar graphs, line graphs, or circle graphs rather than tables, particularly if the tables are multicolumn. Tables are harder to interpret than a graphic presentation of the content. Also, tables can easily contain too much information.

Figure 7A shows you the tabular data from which Figure 7B is extracted. Obviously, the table is easier to grasp. Tables are more acceptable in written reports, where the reader has time to study them, but line and bar graphs depicting the trends established will provide the audience immediate visual access.

Use Visuals Effectively
The key to using graphics and visual aids effectively requires using them so that they make the maximum impact. Begin your presentation with no aids, as you want your audience to be listening to you, not looking at props, specimens, or other visual aids. Present the aid at the appropriate point in your presentation, then remove it immediately. Present the aid; give your audience a few seconds to comprehend it, and then comment on the aid. Use a pointer, such as a laser pointer, to focus your audience on the part of the graphic you are discussing.

Be sure to speak slowly and deliberately as you explain or use a graphic to avoid confusing your audience. In addition, remember to talk to your audience, keeping eye contact, and not to the object or visual aid.

Be sure that all writing on transparencies can be clearly seen. If possible, use color transparencies and color pens. Slides, whether 35mm or PowerPoint, are excellent visual aids, but these, too, need to be used with care.

Keep slides simple. Avoid excessive data on slides. Powerpoint helps you avoid this particular trap, but PowerPoint allows you almost unrestricted use of color. It’s easy to use too much color or a slide background that is entirely too ornate.

Figure 8A uses a background that makes the text more difficult to read than it would be on a plain background (Figure 8B).

If you are preparing slides or transparencies for video conferencing, use the plain background and a color--such as yellow or light green--and black text. Color can enhance a visual, but it can also reduce the effectiveness of the message. The point is to use good judgment in visual design. Use visual aids, but don’t overdo color or text. Figure 8C shows how sanserif type is often more readable on some templates than serif type (Figure 8A).

Templates available in programs such as PowerPoint are tempting, but they may not be readable when text is placed on them!

When you use slides, tell the audience what they will see, show them the slide; give them time to digest when they are seeing; then comment on the slide.

Turn off the projector lamp between slides. Do not begin talking about another topic while a slide, depicting a past topic, is still showing. Remember: people cannot see and listen at the same time.

Avoid using too many slides or transparencies.

Speaking Effectively--Practice, Practice, Practice
No matter what type of presentation you are giving, your ultimate success as a speaker and the success of the presentation depends on your establishing credibility with your audience. Guidelines on planning, structuring, and delivering the presentation are important because they are designed to build your credibility with your audience. However, no amount of planning and organization will substitute for practice, which builds confidence. Practice also enhances and displays your planning and the value of your ideas.

You audience expects you to be knowledgeable, prepared, organized, and trustworthy. Achieving each of these goals depends on your using and then practicing the guidelines above.

15 Strategies for Giving Oral Presentations
More than death and taxes, the thing people fear most is speaking in public. Needless to say, college students are not immune from this terror, which, for you psychology hounds, even has a name: glossophobia. Unfortunately, in college, it’s not always so easy to avoid public speaking. Some schools have required courses in speech. And even in colleges where speech isn’t a subject, there often is a broad variety of courses that incorporate presentations or reports--and sometimes full-length seminars--into the regular class activities. Still, there’s no need to lose your breakfast (or lunch or dinner) over your upcoming presentation. Our 15 tips for improving your public speaking will make even a garden-variety speaker into a real Cicero:

1. Do your homework. Nobody can give a good presentation without putting in some serious time preparing remarks. Many gifted speakers look as if they’re just talking off the cuff, saying whatever comes to mind. But, in truth, they’ve spent considerable time figuring out what they’re going to say. You should, too.

2. Play the parts. Good presentations are structured in sections. Many presentations need only two or three main points. Organizing your points into a few main points and telling your audience what these parts are—both before and as you go through your presentation—can be the difference between a winning presentation and a loser.

3. Do a dry run. It’s always good to do a run-through (or even a couple of run-throughs) the night before the presentation. This can help with both your timing and your manner of presentation. Be sure to make mental notes if you went on too long or got nervous or stuck. Some people find it useful to have a friend pretend to be the audience: He or she can build up your confidence and maybe even ask a question or two.

4. Look presentable. No need to wear a suit, but it’s hard for people to take a presentation seriously when you look like someone who just rolled out of bed.

5. Talk; don’t read. Nobody enjoys seeing a speaker burying his or her face in a script, reading stiffly from a piece of paper. Try to talk from notes, or, if you use a written-out text, try to look down at it only occasionally. It’s less important that you capture the text word for word than that you present the main ideas in a natural and relaxed way. (Your practice sessions should help you here, since they enable you to better remember what you want to say.)

6. Take it slow. The single biggest mistake inexperienced speakers make is going too fast. Remember that your audience is hearing the material for the first time and isn’t nearly as familiar with the topic as you are.
Extra Pointer. If you find yourself running out of time, either drop or briefly summarize any leftover material. If your presentation includes a discussion period, gesture at the points you haven’t fully covered and suggest them as things that could be discussed later.

7. Use aids. For certain sorts of presentations, visual aids—such as PowerPoints, handouts, even things written on the board—can help your audience locate and grasp the main points. Just be sure to explain these materials fully in your presentation: No one is happy to see an outline that can’t be made heads or tails of.

Extra Pointer. Some presenters find the “speaker notes” feature useful in PowerPoint (you see a pane with your notes that the audience doesn’t see). It sure beats flashcards.

8. Don’t bury the crowd. Including massive numbers of quotations or unfathomable amounts of data can overwhelm even the most attentive audience.

9. Be yourself. As important as the content you present is your authenticity in presenting it, so don’t try to be someone you’re not. You’ll never succeed.

10. Play it straight. There’s no harm in including a little humor in your presentations, especially if you can carry it off well. But in most college presentations, clowns will get C’s.

11. Circle the crowd. A very important part of public speaking is to make eye contact with people seated in all parts of the room—even those noding off in the back. That shows people that you’re interested in communicating with them—not just getting through this experience as quickly as possible. And it wouldn’t hurt to go out from in back of the podium or desk and walk around the room a little. Sharing space with the audience can also communicate your interest in sharing your results with them, something you surely want to do.

12. Appear relaxed. You don’t have to actually be relaxed—few speakers are—but at least try to appear as relaxed as possible. Bring along some water or a drink, take short breaks from time to time, and think pleasant thoughts. No one enjoys speakers who are trembling and sweating bullets.

Professors’ Perspective. Some professors throw up before having to lecture. It doesn’t happen often—thankfully—but take consolation in knowing that even very experienced speakers find it tense to give a lecture.

13. Finish strong. Always be sure to have a satisfying conclusion to your presentation in which you make clear to the listeners what they now know. It creates a warm feeling in the minds of your listeners and shows them that they’ve really learned something from your talk—which they probably have.

14. Welcome interruptions. Some speakers are terrified that someone will interrupt them with a question or comment. Actually, this is one of the best things that can happen, because it shows that someone in the audience has engaged with what you’re saying, and, if you have the time to offer a brief response, it can actually lead to genuine progress on the point you were making. And two-way conversation (assuming you’re minimally good at it) is always a tension-reducer.

15. Know when to stop lecturing. Certain presentations—especially in advanced or upper-division classes or seminars—can require you to present some material, then lead a discussion. Be sure to attentively listen to any comments or questions your classmates might raise before starting on your answer. And in a discussion period, never lecture (only discuss), and be sure to answer exactly the question asked (don’t offer up more canned—but irrelevant—material). In many classes, how you discuss is as important as how you present.

Public speaking

Public speaking (sometimes termed oratory or oration) is the process or act of performing a presentation (a speech) focused around an individual direct speech to a live audience in a structured, deliberate manner in order to inform, influence, or entertain them. Public speaking is commonly understood as the formal, face-to-face talking of a single person to a group of listeners. It is closely allied to “presenting”, although the latter is more often associated with commercial activity. Most of the time, public speaking is to persuade the audience.

Overview

In public speaking, as in any form of communication, there are five basic elements, often expressed as “who is saying what to whom using what medium with what effects?” The purpose of public speaking can range from simply transmitting information, to motivating people to act, to simply telling a story. Good orators should not only be able to engage their audience, but also be able to read them. The power of a truly great presenter is the ability to change the emotions of their listeners, not just inform them. Public speaking can also be considered a discourse community. Interpersonal communication and public speaking have several components that embrace such things as motivational speaking, leadership/personal development, business, customer service, large group communication, and mass communication. Public speaking can be a powerful tool to use for purposes such as motivation, influence, persuasion, informing, or simply ethos.

In current times, public speaking for business and commercial events is often done by professionals, with speakers contracted either independently, through representation by a speakers bureau paid on commission of 25–30%, or via other means.

Techniques and trainings

Jason Lewis of Expedition 360 public speaking on sustainability issues at the Royal Geographical Society in London, UK. The objectives of a public speaker’s presentation can range from simply transmitting information, to motivating people to act, to simply telling a story. Professional public speakers often engage in ongoing training and education to refine their craft. This may include seeking guidance to improve their speaking skills—such as learning better storytelling techniques, for example, or learning how to effectively use humour as a communication tool—as well as continuous research in their topic area of focus.

A speaker’s checklist is given in TED Talks: The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking they recommend the following:

- Consider fear and anxiety as a motivation force to ebb through circumstances with acceptance.
- Try to make eye contact right from the start.
- Breathe in and out meditatively to reduce the overwhelm.
- Include humor to disarm the tension within the audience towards the subject. But no offensive jokes or corny puns.
- Drinking water avoids mouth getting dry from adrenalin and avoiding an empty stomach reduces anxiety.
- Keeping a coherence with topic and the content, a relatable language will make audience understandable. Avoid over-preparing and under-preparing.
25 Best Practices for Better Business Writing

1. Focus on lucidity or clarity. Write so that your readers will understand your intended meaning. Articulate your thoughts so that the average person can understand them.

2. Use an economy of words. Short sentences are best unless you’re writing for academia or the scientific world. Eliminate unnecessary words and repetition. Less is more.

3. Avoid the latest jargon. Write simply. In an effort to impress readers, some writers mistakenly use the latest buzz words or phrases. It won’t impress articulate senior management.

4. It’s best to capsulize your points. When writing letters or reports, start by stating your information in a condensed form so that it summarizes your points in an easy-to-understand way. You should anticipate important reader questions. Like in journalism 101, answer the following: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Hint – ask yourself: “What do I want the reader to know?”

A lack of writing skills will hold you back or even hurt your career.

5. Professionalism counts. That means avoiding unnecessary enthusiasm or exclamation points. If you’re writing for a job opening, use the salutation, “Dear…” Close your letter or email with “Sincerely” or “Best regards.” Even if you don’t know the reader, “Best” or “Regards” will suffice. The rule of thumb: Before you complete your writing project, consider how others will view it, as though it might appear in a newspaper or public-agency record.

6. Use correct grammatical structure. Your sentences should be complete, not fragmented, and contain a subject, verb, and object. A writer who is skilled at diagramming sentences will undoubtedly communicate skillfully.

7. Employ subject-verb agreement. If your subject is singular, your verb is plural (“He wants an agreement”). If your subject is plural, the verb is singular (“They want an agreement”).

8. Know the right pronouns to use. A pronoun is a word that substitutes for a noun. The most common errors involve the use of “I” vs. “me.” The pronoun “I” is the subject in a sentence (“I want the project”). Me is the object (“Send the project to her and me”).

9. When to use “saw” vs. “seen.” “Saw” is the simple past tense of the word, “see.” While “seen” is the past participle of “see.” For example, you want to write “I saw the bird” and “I have seen the bird.” (“Seen” requires a helper verb, such as “has,” “had” or “have.”)

10. Properly insert your periods when using a quotation. Insert your period outside the quote. However, journalists, such as the practice in this news portal, place the period inside the quotation.

11. Here’s how to use “that” and “which.” “That” is a restrictive clause and it’s used to explain important information (“We don’t sell trucks; cars are the only vehicles that we market”). More often than not, it isn’t necessary to insert “that.” When using “which” remember it’s a nonrestrictive clause, and it introduces supplemental information that isn’t deemed vital (“Our salespeople have a variety of ways to make good commissions, which is important for their incomes”).

12. Correctly use prepositions. A preposition is a word that links nouns, pronouns and phrases. A preposition introduces the object of the preposition. In a prepositional phrase, for example, “The plane is on the tarmac.” (“On” is the preposition.) Typical prepositions include above, after, at, by, for, from, in, into, of, on, over, to, under, upon, and with. Remember – don’t end your sentences in prepositions.

13. When to use “who” or “whom.” “Who” is the subject in a sentence (“The plane is on the tarmac.” (“On” is the preposition.) Typical prepositions include above, after, at, by, for, from, in, into, of, on, over, to, under, upon, and with. Remember – don’t end your sentences in prepositions.

14. How to use “a” vs. “an.” Correct usage depends on the type of words that follow the “a” or “an.” For example, “She was asked whom will be affected.” Otherwise, whom is preceded by a preposition, such as: “At whom did she yell?”

15. Possessives need attention. You add an apostrophe to change your nouns into a possessive form. Here’s how to use a singular possessive: “Did you see the bird’s unique colors?” Plural possessives require that the apostrophe follow the “s” in the noun: “All of the birds’ colors were red.” If there is not a question of possessiveness, then there isn’t an apostrophe.

16. Avoid common mistakes in using “affect” vs. “effect.” “Affect” is a verb and “effect” is a noun. For example, “On a sunny day, the bright sun affects my vision when I try to catch a baseball, and it has an effect on whether I catch it make an out.”

17. Save your copy as successful templates for future prototypes. If you’re successful in writing a good piece – save it – especially, if you sense that you will be writing a similar document for another occasion. You’ll save time, which is money in your wallet. Be sure, though, to substitute the right salutation or other information in the new document.

18. Insert a call for action. Don’t end your writing in a nebulous way. Make it clear what you hope or expect. For example, suggest setting a time or appointment. Give two options for the reader to consider. Ask the reader to choose the preferred option.
19. **Focus on correct genders, names and titles.** These three are the most-important words to readers. Make a mistake with one of these and you’ve offended the readers. By far, these are the most-important words in their vocabularies.

20. **Use courtesy.** Be sure to thank the persons for their consideration. Use the term, "please," whenever you want something. You’ll find that 98 percent of all communications provide an opportunity for one or both of these courtesies. Avoid the trite, dreadful phrase: “Have a nice day.”

21. **Prevent buyers’ remorse.** Enhance your odds for success by including a “buyers’ remorse” statement. Remind the readers about the benefits you’re proposing, and how pleased or glad they’ll be.

22. **Contact information in e-mails.** Your signature should include your contact information, for your reader’s convenience to reach you. If you have an idea or product to market, remember convenience is one of the top five reasons for success.

23. **Proofread your work.** Yes, it’s easy to overlook errors, and it’s important to double check your tone of writing. One trick I use is to read the information aloud. That makes it easy to prevent embarrassing errors. If you write something while you’re in a bad mood, proofreading becomes even more important. Showing anger is not OK in business.

24. **Use your spell check.** Misspelled words are not good for your image. As a safeguard, spell check is a good service. NOTE: However, Microsoft Word’s spell check isn’t 100 percent accurate. In many cases, you’ll have to override the software.

25. **Confirm whenever possible.** When you receive an e-mail document a strategic partner, even unanticipated, don’t leave the person hanging. Respond with a confirmation. It’s considered good manners. Not intended to be all-encompassing, these 25 tips avoid most of the errors I’ve seen as a business-performance consultant. If you’re not supremely confident in your organization’s writing, consider hiring a qualified freelance writer.

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### Writing a Business Letter

**Steps for Writing a Business Letter**

1. **Know**ing how to write a business letter is an academic necessity for students of business, commerce, banking, and finance. It is also a useful skill for anyone planning to enter an administrative role in any industry or profession.

   Business letters are used for correspondence between organizations, firms and companies, institutions and various boards and committees. They are documents frequently used in all levels of government. Students planning to correspond formally in any walk of life need to learn how to write a business letter.

   Cover letters, application letters, letters of acceptance, confirmation letters, letters of introduction, letters of appointment, and cancellation letters are different types of business letters. A successful business letter forms a lasting impression, not only of the person who signs it, but also of the business or organization it represents.

   The manner in which a person communicates alerts readers to their capacity, their level of education, personality, and professionalism. Whether it is a sales letter, or a brief message confirming a meeting, a letter must clearly inform the receiver. The basic principles for all types of business letters are much the same.

**Steps for Writing a Business Letter**

1. Make a list of all the information that will be included in the letter. To be brief, delete any extra adjectives and adverbs.
2. Try to be succinct so that the letter can fit onto one page. Set out the letter using a wide margin setting. Position your address, the receiver’s address, and the subject of the letter in the correct places. The subject is centered over the first paragraph.
3. Start by stating the reason why you are writing.
4. In order to make sure the main points of the message are clear, put the important parts of the message in three central paragraphs.
5. Most business letters have a letterhead, which contains all the contact information of the sender. The message must be placed in the middle of the page under the letterhead between a greeting and a salutation.
6. The greeting usually starts, “Dear [Name].” Always address the person by their formal name. It is “Dear Smith Hoggard” and not “Dear Smith.”
7. The salutation is usually formal, such as “My best regards,” or “Yours faithfully.”
8. Type your full name in upper case letters below your signature, if necessary.
9. Letters are usually formatted in block style, with no indents, and all lines aligned to the left. Writing that is aligned left is always more legible than justified paragraphs.

**Key Points to Consider**

- The traditional format of a business letter is important: those who receive business letters expect them to be set out in a particular way.
- The correct tone of a business letter is unassuming but confident. It is unprofessional to write long sentences, or to take a long time to get to the point.
- Personal topics, such as family news or casual felicitations should be kept out of business letters.
- It is not wise to use contractions, slang, jargon, or to use a conversational tone.
- Lengthy descriptions have no place in a business letter. Sentences must be brief and to the point, without embellishment, flattery or extra phrasing.

**Do and Don’t**

**Do**

- Do remember to use the correct traditional layout.
- Do check all details. Mistakes in addresses, telephone numbers, or email addresses could mean the letter does not reach its destination, is confusing to the recipient, or shows the sender to be negligent or forgetful.
- Do fold the sheet of paper in thirds to fit into the right size envelope.
- Do use the best paper and black ink.

**Don’t**

- Don’t use a personal style – business letters are impersonal and formal.
- Don’t include details unless they are relevant to the main reason for sending the letter.
- Don’t use clichés or hackneyed phrases. Make sure your idioms are correct.
- Don’t forget that grammar, punctuation, syntax and word choice affect meaning, and must impress the recipient with your language.
Do start and finish with an interesting phrase without being too flowery.
Do make sure the date on the letter is the same as the mailing date.
That is, a letter should be posted the day the final draft is written.

Common Mistakes
- Avoid being servile.
- Avoid long paragraphs. Write the introduction last.
- Draft and edit many times until you are happy with the tone, form, and content.
- An effective business letter should call the recipient to action. Be clear with the message without being demanding or rude.
- Make sure the tone matches the occasion and the establishment you are addressing. Complex terminolgy is to be avoided.
- Ignoring convention and placing items in the wrong places. Spacing is important, and wide margins are vital. There should be two-line spaces between paragraphs.
- A business letter should never have more than two folds in a paper.
- If the letter is being emailed, it should be word-processed, laid out properly in an A4 portrait document, and attached.
- Sometimes writers forget to make a call for future action. It is vital to ask for an interview, or require a phone call, or request a follow-up letter, or some other response. Make a clear indication of what you would like the person reading your business letter to do next.

Now that you have acquainted yourself with the basic business letter writing tips and rules, you can check out our business letter samples to link theory with practice.

The following is a brief overview of the dos and don'ts of good business writing. Note that this list is not nearly all inclusive. The following merely features some of the frequent mistakes I've encountered while reading student papers. Even if you are already a good writer there may be an item or two below that you have not incorporated into your skills. Therefore, please take the time to read all the dos and don'ts. Note, especially, the items that apply specifically to business writing (as opposed to writing that you will do for, say, an English or History class).

Do
- Write clearly and concisely. (Business writing should be more clear and concise than other forms of writing. Rarely should a piece of business writing be more than one page. If the document is more than one page it should probably include a brief, one paragraph "Executive Summary" at the outset. Avoid excessive use of the passive voice.)
- Proof/edit your work more than once before printing out a finalized version. The finished product shouldn't look like your initial draft. Reading each line backward can help you avoid the distraction of content. Remember to re-read slowly and carefully and to use spelling and grammar checkers after editing, and before printing, your final copy. Read your printed copy before submission to make sure that correctly spelled words are the correct words for the sentences.
- Pretend you are the reader with no prior knowledge during your editing. (Is the content understandable on its own?)
- Create e-mail messages in a business environment as you'd create a written memo. Include proper punctuation and formalities.
- Use bulleted, or numbered, lists as effective tools to quickly alert the reader to key points or conclusions.
- Keep your sentences short (but not simplistic; each sentence should still add meaning).
- Avoid abstractions and use concrete language.
- Structure elements in a series in parallel form. (For instance, on a resume, list your job activities with a series of active verbs as the first word--"Organized..., Managed..., Performed..., etc." not "Organized..., I managed..., Once helped to..., etc." Notice the parallel format of this Dos and Don'ts list.)
- Sum up, or otherwise highlight, key points briefly. Avoid repetition in the body of the work, however.
- Utilize commas correctly, without creating run-on sentences.
- Pay attention to paragraph length and structure. (Include only one main idea per paragraph--included in the first sentence, if possible.)
- Use a reader-based (you rather than I) approach. Plan your communication around the recipient's questions and expectations.
- Adapt to your intended audience: level of education, degree of formality based on your relationship, interest and knowledge of subject, and organizational expectations.

Don't
- Don't write for a business audience the way you would talk, or write an e-mail message, to a friend.
- Don't use Courier or other inappropriate fonts. Stick with Times New Roman or something similar. Likewise, don't use font sizes smaller than 10 on a regular basis. The same could be said for sizes larger than 12.
- Don't write a rambling essay for business readers. Writing a fictionalized novel requires a very different technique from summarizing facts and conclusions for your boss or colleagues. Organize your thoughts into relatively short sections under descriptive headers.
- Don't utilize the same adjective or verb repeatedly.
- Don't misuse your modifiers. The meaning will become unclear or even the opposite of what you intended.
- Don't shift number, tense, gender, subject, or point of view.
- Don't inject your opinion. Phrases like "I think..." or "In my opinion..." should be avoided. Save your own musings for when they are asked for. At that point include them in less formal modes of communication (possibly verbal).
- Don't exaggerate. Again, you are not writing fiction. Exaggeration will lessen your work in the eyes of others and leave you open to exception. Avoid words like always, never, etc.
- Don't use sexist language, out-dated expressions, and jargon which your reader might not understand.
- Don't wait until the last minute to begin writing. Sleep on your drafts.

**Dos and Don'ts of Writing a Business Plan**

Writing a business plan is a crucial step in starting and/or operating a small business. However, the thought of writing a business plan can seem overwhelming. To help you avoid some common errors, consider these suggested do's and don'ts of writing a business plan.
Do understand that the planning process is critical to running a successful business. You gain significant expertise by writing your own business plan. It is typically not a good idea for someone else to write your plan, since you are the expert in your business and you may need to verify assumptions about your business idea.

**Do utilize the business plan outline to determine what to include in your plan.** The business plan outline serves as a guide to how to format your business plan. Once complete, the business plan should identify the expectations you have for your new or existing business.

**Do answer key questions such as who, what, where, when, how, why, and how much?** A quality business plan contains considerable detail and answers pointed questions concerning who, what, where, when, how, why, and how much. Make sure this information is clear.

**Do take time to research all components and write a comprehensive, detailed plan.** If you are going to use your business plan to obtain financing, the completed plan should “tell the story” of your business to a potential lender. The plan should serve as a stand-alone document, meaning that all business issues are addressed without requiring additional verbal explanation.

**Do include market research.** Market research includes important information about your current and potential customers including demographics (income, age, etc.) and industry information. Your business plan should discuss the size and market for your business. Market research helps to determine the feasibility of your idea, an appropriate marketing strategy for your customers, and the product or service’s likelihood of selling. In addition, market research lends credibility to your plan. Always include such details in your business plan and cite the data sources.

**Do include a financial plan and projections.** This is one of the most critical parts of your business plan. The financial plan provides the numbers that correspond to your written plan. It is important to research the expected future revenues and expenses for your business. Monthly income statements and cash flow projections should be included. Existing businesses should also include historical financial statements.

**Do explain how the plan relates to the financial projections.** You should always include a narrative explaining the assumptions you used to develop income statement and cash flow projections. You must demonstrate that your numbers are reasonable.

**Do research costs thoroughly in order to provide more accurate numbers.** Taking time to gather cost estimates improves your chances for success. Determine all possible costs for starting and/or operating your business.

**Don’t just "guess" what your costs may be.** Use historical averages if yours is an existing business. Make a list of one-time and recurring costs so you do not overlook costs that may not be obvious (e.g. signage, janitorial service or waste disposal, licenses and permits, deposits, etc.). Try to obtain price quotes from knowledgeable sources such as the suppliers of your inventory, fixed assets, etc. If leasing a space, ask the lessor or other tenants for cost information concerning utilities, etc. Additionally, you may ask advisors about price quotes on insurance, professional fees (CPA, attorney), etc.

**Do state the amount of funds requested if you are using your plan to obtain financing.** If you are going to use your plan to apply for a start-up loan or growth funding, specifically state the amount of funds requested, planned use of those funds, and demonstrate how those funds will be repaid. In addition, it is important to state the amount of your planned owner’s cash contribution to the project as well as identify the collateral available to secure the loan.

**Do revise and modify your plan as circumstances change.** The business plan is a dynamic document. Circumstances are likely to change within the course of planning, starting and operating your business. Always update your plan to reflect such changes.

**Do discuss your experience and skills in detail.** Your business idea or current business strategy may be a viable one, but without good management skills to execute it, your chances for success are poor. Past experience within the industry is valuable and gives you credibility. Thoroughly describe your past experience with the business. If you are new to the business with limited experience, discuss your plans for training, hiring key personnel, etc.

**Do address strengths and weaknesses of your business idea.**

**Do not be biased when composing your business plan.** The reader will want to know both the strengths and weaknesses/risks of your business. Additionally, if you are aware of the weaknesses, you may formulate a strategy for improvement.

**Do consider all your competition.** Your business will not operate without external forces such as competition. Address strengths and weaknesses of existing and potential competitors.

**Do submit your plan to the SBDC for feedback and guidance.** The SBDC can provide valuable assistance and recommendations for improving your plan.

**Do use your plan to monitor actual performance and compare to your expectations.** Your completed plan is a valuable tool in the management of your business. Review the progress and performance of your business against expectations and assumptions. Modify your plan when appropriate. Use your plan to guide the decision-making process so that your business stays focused on achieving its long-term goals.

**Don't handwrite your business plan.** A handwritten plan does not convey a professional tone.

**Don’t expect to complete your plan in a couple of days.** The business planning process is very time-intensive. You must be prepared to spend adequate time researching, planning and preparing your business plan.

**Don't limit your plan to a minimum or maximum number of pages.** There is no set “limit” to the number of pages a business plan must contain. Focus on the quality of the content, rather than the quantity of pages. It is better to be clear and concise than wordy and ambiguous.

**Don't assume you are required to use business plan software.** You do not have to use business plan software to write your business plan. A simple word processing program will be more than adequate for the narrative sections of your plan and using Excel spreadsheets allows you to customize your projections.

**Don't struggle with trying to make your plan "fit" into a generic mold.** You may use the business plan outline as a guide, but you should customize your plan to meet your specific needs.

**Don't misspell words or make grammatical errors.** Misspelled words and grammatical errors point to a lack of detail orientation. Consider using a spell check function and having someone look over your plan for errors.

**Don't assume the reader of your plan is an expert in the industry.** Typically, readers of business plans see many throughout the course of the year. Most likely, a lender or other reader will not be an expert on your business type. Therefore, you must explain all technical/operational details as well as avoid unnecessary use of industry jargon.
Don't rush through writing a business plan because you want financing. A hastily written plan with minimal research will not help your goal of obtaining financing. A lender wants to see a well-thought-out business plan. The planning process is crucial and should not be rushed. The lender will recognize that you have not put the proper time into planning and researching.

Don't overestimate revenues. When constructing your financial projections, be conservative in estimating your revenues.

Don't underestimate expenses and costs. You do not want to receive funding for your business and be "strapped for cash" soon after. A lender is not likely to lend more money if you miscalculate your expenses. It is a good idea to project the maximum expense you might reasonably pay and include a "cushion" that allows for unforeseen events.

Don't leave out relevant facts and details. A thorough and detailed business plan shows that you have done your "homework." Including all relevant facts helps to convey the full extent and scope of your business idea.

Don't fill your business plan with meaningless fluff. Although you should include all relevant facts and details, avoid the temptation to make your business plan sound professional by using an endless array of business-like terms that have little or no real meaning. Be professional, but remember that the plan should be easy to read as well.

Don't plagiarize or copy/paste from other sample business plans. Always customize your plan to your specific business objectives so your business plan doesn't sound standardized.

Legal Aspect of Business Communication

Business communication can take many forms, including sales pitches, marketing messages, press releases and even company meetings, depending on the audience and communication medium. Business communication competencies tend to focus on building relationships and achieving productive results, but the legal aspect must also be considered. Certain areas of business communication are strictly regulated by law, while others can lead to potentially harmful civil litigation. Understanding the legal framework in which business communication deals just as much with internal dialogs as communication with outside stakeholders. The Equal Opportunity Employment Commission and the Department of Labor regulate such issues as harassment, threats, hostile work environments and dishonest communication with employees. Individual states further enforce their own internal communications regulations via state regulations.

Disclaimers

Product and service disclosures are meant to protect businesses from potentially harmful litigation in the event of misuse or misunderstanding by customers. Disclaimers can be used in court to prove that customers were warned about dangers and risks before using a product or service. Disclaimers can be found on a variety of media, including product packaging and commercial advertisements, or even in sales conversations. Most disclaimers are preventive measures, but some are legally mandated by regulatory bodies. Financial advisers must include disclaimers related to the risks inherent in following their advice, for example, while healthcare products are required to list potentially harmful side effects.

Disclosures

Legal disclosures are similar to disclaimers, but less specific. Although disclaimers are a type of disclosure, other types of disclosures can be legally significant as well. Conflict-of-interest disclosures for stock analysts and financial advisers are one example, as are references for research-based claims in marketing. Non-disclosure agreements approach the issue of legal disclosure from another angle. In non-disclosure agreements, one party agrees to refrain from sharing proprietary information outside of a contractual relationship.

Marketing Communications

Advertising and sales communications must follow legal guidelines for honesty and accuracy. According to the Small Business Administration's overview of advertising and marketing law, advertising claims must be honest, non-deceptive and based on factual evidence. According to the same overview, advertising and marketing law extends to regulate testimonials, product endorsements, advertising to children, claims of environmental responsibility and claims of domestic production. The Federal Trade Commission also strictly regulates direct marketing activities, including telemarketing and email marketing.

Reporting

Financial reporting can be considered a form of business communication, since it involves formally presenting information to investors, regulators and the general public. Using deceptive accounting practices to misrepresent company finances is a weighty legal matter potentially resulting in lawsuits, fines or even criminal charges, not to mention damage to a company's brand reputation. This is one of the most closely regulated areas of business communications and is especially important for publicly traded corporations.

Internal Communications

Business communication deals just as much with internal dialogs as communication with outside stakeholders. The Equal Opportunity Employment Commission and the Department of Labor regulate such issues as harassment, threats, hostile work environments and dishonest communication with employees. Individual states further enforce their own internal communications regulations via state agencies, such as the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

Proposal (business)

A business proposal is a written offer from a seller to a prospective buyer. Business proposals are often a key step in the complex sales process—i.e., whenever a buyer considers more than price in a purchase.

A proposal puts the buyer's requirements in a context that favors the seller's products and services, and educates the buyer about the capabilities of the seller in satisfying their needs.

The professional organization devoted to the advancement of the art and science of proposal development is the Association of Proposal Management Professionals.

Types of proposals

There are three distinct categories of business proposals:

- Formally solicited
- Informally solicited
- Unsolicited

Solicited proposals are written in response to published requirements, contained in a request for proposal (RFP), request for quotation (RFQ), invitation for bid (IFB), or a request for information (RFI).

Request for proposal (RFP)

RFPs provide detailed specifications of what the customer wants to buy and sometimes include directions for preparing the proposal, as well as evaluation criteria the customer will use to evaluate offers. Customers issue RFPs when their needs cannot be met with generally available products or services. RFIs are issued to qualify the vendors who are interested in providing service/products for specific requirements. Based on the response to RFI, detailed RFP is issued to qualified vendors who the organization believes can provide desired services. Proposals in response to RFPs are seldom less than 10 pages and sometimes reach 1,000's of pages, without cost data.
Request for quotation (RFQ) Customers issue RFQs when they want to buy large amounts of a commodity and price is not the only issue—for example, when availability or delivery or service are considerations. RFQs can be very detailed, so proposals written to RFQs can be lengthy but are generally much shorter than an RFP—proposals. RFQ proposals consist primarily of cost data, with brief narratives addressing customer issues, such as quality control.

Invitation for bid (IFB) Customers issue IFBs when they are buying some service, such as construction. The requirements are detailed, but the primary consideration is price. For example, a customer provides architectural blueprints for contractors to bid on. These proposals can be lengthy but most of the length comes from cost-estimating data and detailed schedules.

Request for information (RFI) Sometimes before a customer issues an RFP or RFQ or IFB, the customer will issue a Request for Information (RFI). The purpose of the RFI is to gain “marketing intelligence” about what products, services, and vendors are available. RFIs are used to shape final RFPs, RFQs, and IFBs, so potential vendors take great care in responding to these requests, hoping to shape the eventual formal solicitation toward their products or services.

Informally solicited proposal Informally solicited proposals are typically the result of conversations held between a vendor and a prospective customer. The customer is interested enough in a product or service to ask for a proposal. Typically, the customer does not ask for competing proposals from other vendors. This type of proposal is known as a source proposal. There are no formal requirements to respond.

Unsolicited proposal Unsolicited proposals are marketing brochures. They are always generic, with no direct connection between customer needs or specified requirements. Vendors use them to introduce a product or service to a prospective customer. They are often used as “leave-behinds” at the end of initial meetings with or customers or “give-aways” at trade shows or other public meetings. They are not designed to close a sale, just introduce the possibility of a sale.

Components Formally solicited proposal
1. Requirements Matrix, which matches customer requirements with the paragraph and page numbers of where those requirements are addressed in the proposal
2. Executive Summary, which outlines the primary benefits of the vendor’s solutions to the customer’s requirements
3. Technical Volume, which demonstrates how each requirement will be met
4. Management Volume, which describes how the program will be managed
5. Cost Volume, which provides all costing data, as well as implementation plans and schedules

Informally solicited business proposal
1. A description of the seller’s capabilities or products
2. A discussion of key issues
3. A description of the buyer’s specifications and how they will be met
4. The cost of the offering
5. A schedule for delivery of the products or services
6. Proof of prior experience i.e. Testimonials from previous customers, Descriptions of previous projects

Managing business proposals Managing proposals presents an enormous challenge for sales and marketing teams. Many established management methods are ill-suited to deal with the broader issues associated with the production and delivery of proposals.

The process of proposal management Proposal management is an inherently collaborative process. It often consists of the following basic roles and responsibilities:

- Creator — responsible for creating and editing content.
- Editor — responsible for tuning the content message and the style of delivery, including translation and localization.
- Publisher — responsible for releasing the content for use.
- Administrator — responsible for managing access permissions to documents and files, usually accomplished by assigning access rights to user groups or roles.
- Consumer or viewer — the person who reads or otherwise takes in content after it is published or shared.

Increasingly, the term proposal management is being used to suggest that engagement with the proposal process is important to more than just the sales team, and should also affect those working in marketing, legal, and sales.

There is also an increasing trend towards using proposal management software that allows users to quickly and easily create proposals, collaborate with team members, track and analyze customer engagement.

Proposal Writing
Writing a successful proposal can be made easier through the development of a proposal checklist that contains the necessary standardized information that is typically contained in 80% of all of your sales proposals. This makes it much easier for the proposal writer to build a shell and then research the roughly missing 20%. For example, the Company Name, Mission Statement, History, Qualifications should remain the same for most proposals leaving the Pricing section and specific Product and Service options specific to the customer to be customized for the current target customer. At times, the process can be tedious, but the steps are pretty basic. Besides solicited and unsolicited proposals, the others that exist include internal proposals and sole-source contracts.[3]

Internal Proposals
Internal proposals are ideas or projects that are presented to whomever holds the position of top management in a company. These types of proposals can be written by a particular individual, group, department, or division of a particular company. One example of this is when the manager of a product line writes a proposal suggesting that the company should robotize the production process. Some advantages to this includes easier communication, knowing the client’s needs and making fast decisions. Some advantages to this may include competition from other companies and the lose of management champions.[4]

Sole-source Contract
These types of proposals are made when a private firm, government agency, or association negotiates to supply a service or product to a single company and when a company has excellent credibility and a track record of achievements. The standard format for this type of proposal consists of information about a specific product, including the price and delivery schedules. Some advantages to this include not having to have resources to win a contract and the firm or client knows what time the work will be coming.

Format
Proposals are based on research, making it important for the researcher of the proposal to know about their client. The researcher must know the background of the idea that is being presented and show that he or she is well prepared to deal with a problem or situation.
their client has. The research for a company, institute, firm, etc. is done in advance, thereby increasing the chances of a well done proposal and the reader of the proposal will have a good idea of the outcome from the research that has been done. A general format for proposals includes the title page, abstract, scholarly statement of the problem and the method to solve it, the budget, and biographical information.

Title As small as it may seem, it is important that the title page be curt and definite. It would be a good idea to use key words for the purpose of indexing as long as it written in a relevant pattern.

Abstract This part of the proposal should state the situation, method, goal, scope, and the expected outcome. It usually consists of 200 words. Carl B. Palmer, Chief of Sponsored Research, Grants and Research Contracts, Office Space Science, and NASA says that the summary of an abstract has to be ‘short, lean, and all muscle.’ He also points out that managers usually take a short glance at the abstract and will only concentrate on the proposal itself if a message comes through

Statement and Method It is important to highlight the main idea that is being presented. First the writer of the proposal should state what the idea is and do something to make it unique. Next, the writer should explain what to do with the idea. Be sure to avoid phrases such as: “No one has thought of doing this before” or “This is entirely original.” Doing so, will make the writer seem dull and inattentive.

Budget The writer of the proposal includes the grant and the total amounts of money it is going to be paid by it. It is stressed that the pay scale must be compatible with the company's scale. The money of researchers is part of a single person's company salary and because of this, a business is required to take away some of the duties of a researcher. The writer includes the estimated costs of disposable materials, equipment, and supplies. This part of the proposal would also consist of travel, publication costs, and direct costs.

Biographical information This part of the proposal basically deals with proving to the client that the person writing and submitting the proposal is capable of doing the job. Everyone that contributed to the making of the proposal is mentioned, including their achievements. Usually, a proposal uses persuasion to get its audience to buy into their idea. One example is when a proposal tries to persuade one or more sponsors to invest in a project. Another example of using a proposal to persuade a client is when the company writing the proposal is asking for a grant. The categories that can involve grants include social services, health care, religions, philanthropy, economic development, government, and education. Persuasion can only work when these components are involved: sponsor values, applicant credibility, proposal logics, and proposal psychologies. Another way to make proposals persuasive is to connect the ideas of a project to the sponsor’s values or problems of interest.

Sponsor Values Sponsors or grantmakers main focuses include any specific dilemma, inequities or injustices. Their mission is to fill in the space between the categories of “what is” and “what ought to be.” One example is an organization trying to prevent child abuse called The Prevent Abuse Foundation. Their activities include giving support to families and children and teaching about the abuse and how to eliminate it. In addition to this, the foundation serves grass roots, community-based groups with technical and professional assistance, sharing the best program practices and evaluation techniques

Applicant Credibility An applicant’s job is to authorize organizational, individual, and project credibility. When an organization is proposing an idea to be presented by a project director, it is important for them is have credibility. Being persuasive is also one of the keys to success. An organization would try to convince its target of how different and unique it is from any other company. One example is a biology department at a university asking for money to do research in genetics. The department may go on to say that it has had 30 years of medical studies in biology and that their research inspects both hormonal and genetic elements that causes gene regulation.

Proposal Logics This basically deals with the making of proposal elements that illustrates an identified gap, an improved situation, and resulting benefits to the intended population. Benefits serve as the good things that will happen by completing the objectives that are presented. The components must reflect a relationship between the sponsor values and the project that is being proposed. An exact description of the problem or need is required along with the purpose of the organization, funds and how to complete the objections. It also includes a timeline and a summarization of the intended audience.

Proposal Psychologies Sponsors would usually provide money for both psychological and logical reasons. Proposal psychologies tend to the emotional needs of the sponsor. The components that can be found in a successful proposal include passion, ownership, energy, trust, and commitment. Sponsors use grants as investments. Sponsors need to feel that you are serious about helping them with their problems. One example can be a proposal to a federal agency and a private college that describes its long history of achievement by working with community partners, controlling national programs that help the intended population, and institutionalizing project activities. The project partners have worked with grant related initiatives which includes a six-year joint teacher education program among the Midwestern Regional College and the College of Native Americans. The idea the project director has for Native American middle school kids includes Achievement in Math, Math and Science Immersion and Kids Math Camp. As long as a proposal expresses interest and concern for the values and ideal of the sponsor, there is a good chance for success.

BUSINESS PROPOSALS

Business proposals are documents that attempt to persuade targeted clients to buy a particular service or product. These documents, which are used in academia and government as well as business and industry, may range from relatively short (a few pages) proposals to "formal" documents of 50 or more pages. Many business proposals—and especially those proffered by startup businesses seeking to obtain new clients and business—are unsolicited (those that are created at the request of the prospective client are known as "request for proposals"). Given the fact that many business proposals have not been formally requested by the recipient, businesses that put these documents together have to make sure that they create a final product that will grab the attention of the prospective client in a positive way. As Tom Sant wrote in Small Business Reports, "whether you’re selling products, services, ideas or projects, you need a proposal to persuade clients that whatever you’re selling is the best solution to their business problems. In short, a proposal is a selling tool."

ELEMENTS OF THE BUSINESS PROPOSAL

Business proposals are sometimes lumped in the same category as competitive bids. But other analysts point out that proposals—and especially unsolicited proposals, whether aimed at convincing a publisher to publish your new book idea or convincing an investor to take a look at a potential new business site—are essentially designed to pique the interest of the prospective client. For this reason, such proposals often do not get into the nuts and bolts of compensation, time frame, and other matters. Competitive bids, on the other hand, provide detailed information on all aspects of the proposed business arrangement.

Standard elements of basic business proposals include the following (although, depending on the degree of formality of the proposal, not all parts are always necessary):
**Executive Summary**—This is the portion of the proposal where you make your case for a business arrangement. "This is the most important part of your proposal," said Sant. "It's the section that will be read by every decision maker. Make sure it's easy to read. Avoid technical jargon and technical details. Focus on organizational issues and benefits, and keep it short."

**Body/Procedures Section**—This is the section in which you place technical details and explanations, as well as information on price, implementation schedules, logistical and support issues, documentation, and training. Legal experts note that if the proposal is accepted, it can become a legally binding document. For this reason, and because of the length of time that is usually necessary to produce this section, writers of unsolicited proposals may wish to hold off on preparing this section unless the targeted person or company expresses interest in the basic proposal.

**Writing a Successful Proposal**

Writing a successful proposal requires both salesmanship and fundamental communication skills. "Basically, proposals—like other reports—should be factual, objective, logical, well written," said Murphy and Hildebrandt. "They should also be persuasive. All proposals should present facts honestly to justify the requested expenditure to be paid by the reader's organization to the writer's firm or to an individual for solving a problem or altering a procedure." In addition, many business communication experts counsel their clients to arrange their proposal in such a way to emphasize persuasive arguments at the beginning and the conclusion of the proposal, which often are the most remembered sections of any presentation.

Ultimately, however, it is commonly believed that the likelihood of garnering new business via business proposals, whether solicited or not, lies with anticipating the priorities of the targeted firm or individual. As Colette Nassutti observed in Outlook, an essential ingredient of successful proposals is the proposal writer's ability to understand the prospective client's circumstances, requirements, and business objectives. Sant agreed, pointing out that "a focus on cost is advantageous if your client is experiencing a period of decline," while "advanced, automated solutions will appeal to growing companies." Proposals aimed at companies that are well-known for attention to quality, advertising image, or quick product development can be structured accordingly as well.

Writing in the Los Angeles Business Journal, Sharon Berman noted that "Doing your homework and making the required preparations can make all the difference. This is especially important in light of the enormous time and effort required to craft a professional proposal." In order to create proposals that address the client’s needs more directly and persuasively, Berman suggests meeting with key decision-makers ahead of time and asking probing questions to determine exactly what they are looking for. Sometimes a prospective client may request a proposal as a way to gain leverage with their current service providers, or they may be planning to change their current operations and anticipate new or different needs. This type of information can be invaluable in shaping the proposal.

**What is the Importance of Contracts to a Business?**

The business environment is full of agreements between businesses and individuals. While oral agreements can be used, most businesses use formal written contracts when engaging in operations. Written contracts provide individuals and businesses with a legal document stating the expectations of both parties and how negative situations will be resolved. Contracts also are legally enforceable in a court of law. Contracts often represent a tool that companies use to safeguard their resources.

**Facts** Business contracts typically include a negotiation process in which various terms to which each party must abide are stipulated. The negotiation process may take days, weeks or months, depending on the contract and the contractual responsibility of each party. Contracts also can include a process for making changes or addendums to the agreement. Businesses frequently use contracts to ensure that a certain level of service is maintained or that competing companies do not have access to specific economic resources.

**Fix Resource Costs** A common use of business contracts is the creation of an agreement or company that agrees to sell economic resources to another at a fixed cost. These contracts ensure manufacturing or production businesses can obtain economic resources at a specific price for a defined time period. Businesses also use these contracts to hedge against the potential cost increase of economic resources. Fixed cost contracts may backfire on companies if a decrease in economic resources occurs in the future.

**Limit Obligations** Service contracts outline the specific duties a company will perform in a contractual agreement. These contracts typically are used when companies contract with other businesses to perform services such as maintenance, technical support or call-center operations. Service contracts usually include information relating to prices for each service and the frequency at which the company will perform the services. Businesses use these contracts to ensure that they do not complete work without being compensated.

**Non-Compete Agreements** Businesses often use contracts to enforce non-compete agreements. Non-compete agreements prohibit individuals or other businesses from offering goods or services in the economic marketplace. These contracts create strategic relationships between two companies and allow them to provide unique goods or services to consumers. Companies also can use non-compete agreements to limit the type of services offered by former employees who have specific knowledge about the company’s specialized business services.

**Expert Insight** Legal advice should be sought before entering into any binding contract. Small businesses may be susceptible to larger businesses taking advantage of the entrepreneur’s willingness to complete business functions. Contracts often include difficult legal terms that many business owners fail to understand. Attorneys can provide clear information on the benefits of business contracts and whether small businesses should agree to specific contractual terms.

**How do I Write a Business Agreement?**

**Business Agreements** When you have a business where customers contract you to perform a service, you need a legally binding agreement to spell out the terms and conditions of the business relationship. According to "All Business," a business agreement serves...
as a guide that all parties to the agreement must follow. Generally, one party draws up the agreement and both parties sign the it as an acknowledgment of the terms and conditions it contains.

Step 1 Write or type up the date on the agreement to establish an effective date.

Step 2 List the parties involved in the agreement, using full business or individual names and titles. For example, you may title your business as the “Service Provider” and the customer as “Customer.”

Step 3 Describe your obligations, including the service you must perform to fulfill your obligations under the contract and be as detailed as possible. For example, if you are writing a marketing brochure for a customer, describe the length of the brochure, the purpose of the brochure and establish that you are only responsible for providing the text, and not the layout or design, for the brochure.

Step 4 Describe the other party’s obligations in detail. In the case of our brochure writing example, this might explain that the client is responsible for providing the copywriter with business information in a word processing document to describe the business and the information to be included in the brochure text.

Step 5 Describe the payment terms for the transaction, including the total amount for the service, how much and when the deposit is due and how much and when the final payment is due.

Step 6 Spell out a time line or milestones. Include specific dates for the delivery of parts of the service or the final deadline for the service to be complete.

Step 7 Write a termination clause that explains the steps that one or both parties need to take in order to terminate the contract. For example, you may say that either party can terminate the agreement with a written 15-day prior notice to the other party. Also, include payment terms for any work completed to date that the customer is responsible for paying for this portion of the work.

Step 8 Write a dispute clause to establish the handling of a dispute between the two parties. For example, arbitration is one method the parties can agree to in the case where a dispute arises between them.

Step 9 Establish ownership rights to the work. Even in service situations, a product is sometimes the result of the work, so you should also include which party retains ownership rights. For example, the copywriter can state that she turns over all rights to the writing of the brochure to the customer and that she makes no claims of ownership to the writing once the customer pays for the written product.

Step 10 Add signature and date lines. Be sure to provide a space for each party to sign and date.

**Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Communication**

**Intrapersonal Communication** Intrapersonal communication takes place within a single person, often for the purpose of clarifying ideas or analyzing a situation. Other times, intrapersonal communication is undertaken in order to reflect upon or appreciate something. Three aspects of intrapersonal communication are self-concept, perception and expectation.

- **Self-concept** is the basis for intrapersonal communication, because it determines how a persona sees him/herself and is oriented toward others. Self-concept (also called self-awareness) involves three factors: beliefs, values and attitudes. Beliefs are basic personal orientation toward what is true or false, good or bad; beliefs can be descriptive or prescriptive. Values are deep-seated orientations and ideals, generally based on and consistent with beliefs, about right and wrong ideas and actions. Attitudes are learned predisposition toward or against a topic, ideals that stem from and generally are consistent with values. Attitudes often are global, typically emotional. Beliefs, values and attitudes all influence behavior, which can be either spoken opinion or physical action. Some psychologists include body image as an aspect of intrapersonal communication, in that body image is a way of perceiving ourselves, positively or negatively, according to the social standards of our culture. Other things that can affect self-concept are personal attributes, talents, social role, even birth order.

- **Perception** focuses internally, perception looks outward. Perception of the outside world also is rooted in beliefs, values and attitudes. It is so closely intertwined with self-concept that one feeds off the other, creating a harmonious understanding of both oneself and one’s world.

- **Expectations** are future-oriented messages dealing with long-term roles, sometimes called life scripts. These sometimes are projections of learned relationships within the family or society. Intrapersonal communication may involve different levels of communication activity: internal discourse, solo vocal communication, and solo written communication.

- **Internal discourse** involves thinking, concentration and analysis. Psychologists include both daydreaming and nocturnal dreaming in this category. **Prayer**, contemplation and meditation also are part of this category, though from a theological point of view the argument may be made that this is not solely internal to one person. In Sufi tradition, this is similar to the concept of nafs, negotiating with the inner self. Example: Consciously appreciating the beauty of a sunset.

- **Solo vocal communication** includes speaking aloud to oneself. This may be done to clarify thinking, to rehearse a message intended for others, or simply to let off steam. Example: Talking to yourself as you complain about your boss.

- **Solo written communication** deals with writing not intended for others. Example: An entry in a diary or personal journal.

**Direct Interpersonal Communication** Direct interpersonal communication involves a direct face-to-face relationship between the sender and receiver of a message, who are in an interdependent relationship. Because of interpersonal communication’s immediacy (it is taking place now) and primacy (it is taking place here), it is characterized by a strong feedback component. Communication is enhanced when the relationship exists over a long period of time. Interpersonal communication involves not only the words used but also the various elements of nonverbal communication. The purposes of interpersonal communication are to influence, help and discover, as well as to share and play together.

**Interpersonal communication can be categorized by the number of participants.**

- **Dyadic communication** involves two people. Example: Two friends talking.
Group communication involves three or more persons, though communication scholars are inconsistent as to the top end of the number scale. The smaller the number in the group, the more closely this mode resembles interpersonal communication. Often group communication is done for the purpose of problem solving or decision making. Example: University study group.

Public communication involves a large group with a primarily one-way monologue style generating only minimal feedback. Information sharing, entertainment and persuasion are common purposes of public communication. Example: Lecture in university class.

Another way of categorizing interpersonal communication is on the function or setting of the communication.

Organizational communication deals with communication within large organizations such as businesses. This is sometimes considered part of group communication, but communication scholars have built up a body of knowledge focused primarily on organizations. Example: Workfocused discussion between employer and employee.

Family communication focuses on communication patterns within nuclear, extended and blended families. Like organizational communication, this too is sometimes seen as part of the general category of group communication, but much research has been focused specifically on communication within a family relationship. Family communication can be enhanced by the long-standing and close relationships among participants as well as the likelihood that families have shared heritage, similar values, and social rituals. Patterns differ in communication between spouses, between parent and child, among siblings, and within the wider family context. Example: Conversation during a holiday meal.

Additionally, some scholars identify a category of impersonal communication. This is a distinction between impersonal and interpersonal communication on the basis of the quality of the interaction. Impersonal communication is that which involves functional short-term exchanges such as might occur between a shopper and a salesman; the label of interpersonal is reserved for communication that functions in deeper and more meaningful relationships.

The process of interpersonal communication includes several stages over an extended life cycle. Communication scholar Mark Knapp has outlined one useful framework for understanding the coming-together process. Note that these stages can be applied to personal friendships, romantic relationships, business encounters, and many other types of interaction.

- The initial encounter offers a first impression that can be full of communication data. Likes or dislikes can be instantaneous, though many people have learned that first impressions may be misleading.
- Experimenting is the second step in interpersonal communication. In this step, information is exchanged on a variety of topics – general and “safe” at first, gradually becoming more personal and more self-revealing.
- Intensifying follows when the experimentation leads to positive mutual conclusions that the relationship is worth pursuing.
- The fourth step in interpersonal communication is integration, in which mutual decisions are made that the relationship is fulfilling. This is the stage of intense friendships, close business partnerships, romantic commitments, and so on.
- Bonding is the final stage, in which the relationship is sealed (often formally with contracts or written agreements) and generally is publicized (such as through announcements).

Knapp also outlined a similar reverse pattern for the unraveling of interpersonal relationships:

- Differentiating mirrors the initiating phase but focuses instead on the differences that people notice about each other.
- Communication likewise plays a central role in the circumscribing stage, during which time participants in the relationship begin to minimize their communication and confine it to mainly functional topics.
- Stagnating is the next stage, in which the relationship becomes flat and personally unfulfilling and is continued mainly for reasons beyond the relationship, such as religious or family obligation, contractual obligation, or social expectation.
- Overt unpleasantness is evident in the avoidance stage, in which the participants in interpersonal communication both avoid each other and express mutual annoyance when they encounter each other.
- Termination if the final stage of breakdown, at which time legal, religious or other formal contracts are abrogated and the demise of the relationship is announced to others.

**Mediated Interpersonal Communication** Mediated interpersonal communication involves technology that assists or links the sender and receiver of messages. This may involve immediacy (live, or so-called real time). It does not involve a primary context but instead uses technology to link the various parties in communication.

- Dyadic communication includes two people, with some of the elements of interpersonal, but the context is not face-to-face. Example: Two business colleagues using the telephone or e-mail.
- Group communication includes a small group of people. Example: Teleconference in a distancelearning class.

Mediated communication offers the advantage that it allows people to communicate over a distance or throughout a time span that would not be possible in direct communication. E-mail offers instantaneous global communication, and cell phones are highly mobile. Computer technology makes it possible for people to do their job without being physically present, allowing them to work from their home or from across the world. Like direct communication, mediated communication may be formal or informal, personal or public. Feedback may be immediate or delayed. Machines even can assist in communication across language barriers (more on that in Unit 5 on intercultural communication).

Mediated communication has several inherent limitations, including the ability of telephone or Internet users to mask or disguise the source of the message, or the susceptibility of machines to various mechanical or technological noise sources.

**Mass Communication** Mass communication is a more public form of communication between an entity and a large and diverse audience, mediated by some form of technology. This may be either real time or on a tapedelay basis, or it may be rooted in the usually recent past. Examples: Radio and television, newspapers and magazines.
Psychologists and communication scholars have observed a pattern of group development, usually through moderate control styles of small groups have been identified among students working together on a project or company behavior. One of the relationships between nations or the stereotyping play a role in parents' decisions about their children's playmates. In the normal process of communication is thwarted because inappropriate and erroneous interpretations are given to incoming information. We use stereotypes every day to make judgments about people. For example, in personal, family and social contexts, stereotypes play a role in parents’ decisions about their children's playmates. In commercial settings, stereotypes affect both who companies turn to in their business relationships. Stereotyping likewise plays a public role, such as diplomatic relationships between nations or the ethnic profiling that law enforcement agencies use to identify who might be committing a crime. One of the major international and intercultural problems is that many people let stereotypes determine how they will interact with and react to others.

Group Communication Much communication takes place in the context of small groups, which are defined as those of three or more participants. The various and overlapping types of small groups lead to various types of communication patterns. Social groups are units such as families, friends living as roommates, and voluntary recreational groups such as soccer teams. Families also form primary groups, which are defined as those in which people share living and financial arrangements. Families also are an example of reference groups, through which participants gain a sense of identity and an awareness of expected behavior. Work groups are another pattern of relationships. These are built by people who are drawn together by a common task, such as students working together on a project or company employees assigned to a common job activity. Decision-making groups are brought together for the purpose of dealing with a question or policy. Similarly though distinctly, problem-solving groups focus on resolving a problem. The working of groups has been the subject of much study, particularly from the framework of organizational communication. Leadership styles of small groups have been identified – generally in a three-part continuum ranging from high control (authoritarian leaders) through moderate control (democratic leaders) to low control (laissez-faire leaders). A fourth type, called abdacular, involves the total collapse of leadership over uncontrolled group dynamics. Psychologists and communication scholars have observed a pattern of group development, usually presented in a four-fold model.
In the conflict phase, they deal with sources of conflict, usually in an effort to avoid conflict within the group. Too much conflict can prevent the group from functioning. However, some conflict is useful to avoid the pressure toward conformity known as groupthink.

This norm emergence phase centers on compromise, the convergence of ideas, generation of alternative solutions, and eventually consensus. A technique often used to enhance the early part of this phase is brainstorming, in which unrestrained possible solutions and options are generated with no self-censorship or initial group evaluation. The purpose of rainstorming is to generate as many ideas as possible. Only after the ideas have been generated will they be evaluated, keeping the two steps separate and thus allowing the group to consider all possible options.

The closure phase completes the process by concluding the group’s work.

**Conflict and Communication** Because much of the motivation for communication deals with the solving of problems, significant scholarly attention has been given to concepts such as problems, conflict, and consensus. Conflict can be considered in various contexts, but much of the formal study of conflict has been at the interpersonal level. Principles and lessons from that level can be extended to the public and intercultural levels of communication, and the manner in which conflict is approached varies greatly from one culture to another. Even the resolution of conflict varies, from the seeking of clear winners or losers, saving of face (or inflicting shame), short-term gain versus the setting of precedence and long-term implications, and so on. Here are some issues associated with conflict. Here are some principles associated with the study of conflict and the role conflict plays in interpersonal and other levels of communication.

- Consensus building is the creation of a mutually acceptable agreement, achieved through negotiation, built on dialogue, and resulting in the outcome of a commonly agreed-upon conclusion that at least partially accommodates the needs and interests of all parties.
- Conflict management is the process within an organization or social unit that anticipates, researches, identifies potential solutions, and acts to address the problem. Conflict management focuses primarily on changing conditions within the organization without addressing the internal or external cause of the conflict.

**Conflict styles** are the types of strategies and tactics for conflict management that are employed by persons or groups in communicating in a conflict situation. Five styles of being identified.

Two focus on solving the conflict: an integrating style of conflict management involves a high level of concern for both oneself and others; a compromising style involves a moderate level of concern for both. One management styles is less focused on problem solving and more on control; a dominating style reflects a high concern for oneself and a low concern for the other. Two styles seek to steer clear of confrontation: the obliging style stems from a low concern for oneself and a high concern for the other; the avoiding style involves a low concern for both oneself and the other.

- Conflict resolution is permanent resolution of a problem or dispute achieved through dialogue and without physical or verbal violence. Conflict is inevitable. It is negative when it leads to violence, disrupts the communication relationship between the parties involved in the conflict, motivates people to become uncooperative, or prevents the parties from addressing real issues or problems. However, conflict can be a positive creative force when it increases communication, releases stored feelings, leads to the solution of problems, results in the growth of the relationship between the parties in conflict, or improves performance. Conflict is sometimes categorized either as expressive conflict rooted in a desire to release tension or as instrumental conflict that stems from a difference in goals or practices.
- Win-win strategies are positive approaches to resolving conflict in which each side gains something, though perhaps not everything sought.
- Win-lose strategies are negative approaches to conflict in which one side emerges as a clear winner and the other as a clear loser. These negative tactics usually are highly manipulative and are unlikely to lead to a long-term successful resolution of the conflict. Specific negative tactics associated with conflict and communication include steamrilling (hammering away at one’s point of view until the other party gives in), force (physical or emotional coercion), blame (focusing on the cause of the problem instead of its resolution), silencing (prevention of the other side from engaging in communication), rejection (withholding love or affection, even acknowledgment of the other’s existence), and escalation (taking the conflict to a higher level by causing even more serious actual or potential harm).

**Intercultural Differences in Conflict Management** Sociologists and other scholars have researched how people of various racial and ethnic background handle conflict. Their findings suggest that, like many other aspects of intercultural communication, conflict management show some cultural patterns.

Many of the studies conducted in the United States have involved American co-cultures or microcultures (terms replacing the older concept of sub-culture). For example, European Americans show a preference for solution-oriented styles that, in Arab and Muslim countries, sometimes is interpreted as indifferent or lacking emotion. African Americans lean toward a controlling style. Arab Americans, Latino Americans and Asian Americans often make cooperative choices in handling conflict. The style of conflict management also relates to communication styles. For example, people often use emotional language and heated arguments as part of a dominating style of conflict management, whereas an unemotional discussion mode of communicating often is part of a conflict management style that focuses on problem solving.

The dominant culture in the United States (based on the European American model) favors direct, frank and open discussion, whereas the Latin American model features more diplomacy and tact, and the Asian American model includes social deference and respect. Another significant aspects of conflict management across cultures is the notion of face, the deference or respect that a person claims or is given, based on relative social position. In many Asian cultures, both sides in a conflict strive for a solution that will save face; that is, that will allow both sides to avoid being embarrassed or disgraced. Whereas a strong focus on problem solving might lead to a full airing of the conflict, a face-management approach might suggest that no conflict exists. However, both styles would aim at resolving the issue and preventing its recurrence.