

Solutions Manual for Business Communication Process and Product 7th Guffey

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Chapter 1

Business Communication in the Digital Age

Spotlight on Communication Solutions

1. Part 1: How are Canadian Tire and Myant Inc. meeting the demands of today's marketplace?

ANS:

Canadian Tire and Myant Inc. are responding to the demands of today's marketplace by providing innovative products that use cutting-edge technologies. Today's marketplace is competitive and evolving. Through their partnership both companies will thrive as they adapt and change with the times.

2. Part 1: What skills do you think businesspeople need to succeed in today's workplace?

ANS:

A number of employer surveys confirm that communication skills are critical for effective job placement, performance, career advancement, and organizational success. Good communication skills are often ranked among the most requested requirements by employers making job hiring decisions. Businesspeople today need good reading, listening, nonverbal, speaking, and writing skills. In addition to good written and oral communication skills, employees need teamwork skills, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning skills. Written skills are particularly important because technology enables us to transmit messages more rapidly, more often, and to a greater number of people regardless of their physical location. Many people are promoted within organizations because they have good writing skills.

3. Part 2: As a consumer, how do you prefer to learn about a company's loyalty program? Refer to Figure 1.9, and consider media richness and communication effectiveness.

ANS:

This question generates an interesting discussion on loyalty programs and marketing techniques. Have students provide examples of face-to-face, video, audio, written (addressed), and unaddressed documents and their effectiveness.

4. Part 2: Compare the loyalty programs you participate in. Which one has better customer benefits? Why?

ANS:

Loyalty cards and related programs are designed to reach shoppers and encourage frequent dealing with the company. Students should compare the loyalty programs they participate in and create a list of attractive benefits. Further, have them discuss whether they have ever had a large payoff from a loyalty program, like the one Tomas Terfloth received in the Canadian Tire case study.

Solutions to Concept Check Questions

1. LO1: In what ways can a lack of oral and written communication skills affect your performance on the job?

ANS:

In making hiring decisions, employers often rank communication skills among the most valued. Many job advertisements specifically ask for excellent oral and written communication skills. If employees are not able to communicate effectively on the job, their ideas won't be understood and job quality may suffer, resulting in employer dissatisfaction.

Analysis: Communication Skills: Your Pass to Success

2. LO1: Individually or in teams, check the listings on an online job board such as Monster, Workopolis, CanadianCareers, or CollegeGrad. Follow the instructions to search job categories and locations. Find three to five job listings in your field of interest. Examine the skills requested. How often do the ads mention communication and teamwork skills? What tasks do the ads mention? Prepare a list of the most frequently requested skills. Discuss your findings with your team members.

ANS:

Students will notice that all employers require communication or teamwork skills. Have students compare their lists to generate a list of the most frequently requested skills.

Analysis: Succeeding in a Competitive Job Market

3. LO2: In what ways do you see yourself as a learning worker for your current or future employer?

ANS:

Learning workers not only acquire knowledge through their diplomas and degrees but have also developed the knowledge of *how* to learn. Learning workers position themselves to become organizational leaders, anticipating and adapting to industry changes, which makes them valuable, innovative employees. Students should discuss the different ways they learn how to be adaptable and innovative.

Analysis: Tools for Success in the 21st-Century Workplace

4. LO2: Refer to the employability skills listed on the Unit 1 opening page. Write down your five strongest skills related to your chosen career field. How did you develop these skills? Now write down your five weakest skills related to your chosen career field. What can you do to strengthen these skills?

ANS:

Students will choose employability and soft skills from the Unit 1 opening page. They will have developed skills through life experience, formal education, workplace training, mentorship, the way they were raised, and more. In order to strengthen weaker skills, they will mention their formal studies in college/university, co-op and placement opportunities, part-time work, volunteering, school clubs, etc.

Analysis: Unit 1: Introduction

5. LO3: How has the global pandemic affected work practices in Canada?

ANS:

Students can discuss the increase of online meetings and virtual practices for workplaces, including worker training in new communication technologies. Other factors affecting workplaces include safety precautions like social distancing, the installation of plastic dividers, the use of mandatory masks, and frequent sanitizing to protect workers and customers. Encourage students to share personal experiences about how COVID-19 affected their lives.

Analysis: Global Pandemic Impact

6. LO3: Refer to Figure 1.5. Within the next five years, what technologies do you think will dominate the workplace? Write a list of the top three technologies. Do you have these technological skills?

ANS:

Students will provide a list of three technologies from Figure 1.7 and discuss whether or not they have these skills. Encourage students to share how they acquired these skills.

Analysis: Understanding the Nature of Communication

7. LO4: What is the definition of *communication*?

ANS:

Communication may be defined as the transmission of information and meaning from a sender to a receiver. The process is successful only when the receiver understands an idea as the sender intended it.

Analysis: Understanding the Nature of Communication

8. LO4: Consider a time when you were misunderstood. What were the barriers to communication? How did you overcome the misunderstanding?

ANS:

Students will give a personal example that may include one or more barriers that create misunderstanding: bypassing, differing frames of reference, lack of language skills, and distractions.

Analysis: Barriers That Create Misunderstanding

9. LO5: List three ways that managers can improve the downward flow of communication.

ANS:

To improve the downward flow of communication, many managers make the following changes:

- Reengineering their companies into smaller operating units and work teams
- Speaking directly to employees, keeping them informed about how well the company is doing and what new projects are planned
- Providing timely company publications, announcements, meetings, videos, and podcasts

Analysis: Formal Communication Channels: Improving Downward Information Flow

10. LO5: Consider the following scenario: Jon Bender, a managing partner at an executive search firm Consider the following scenario: Jon Bender, a managing partner at an executive search firm, was surprised to receive a nasty, gossipy e-mail about himself. He was obviously not the intended receiver. Instead of shooting back an equally incendiary message, he decided to talk with the sender. He said, "You're upset. Let's talk about it, but it's not appropriate in an e-mail."⁵⁸ In groups, discuss Mr. Bender's response to gossip about himself. Did he do the right thing? How would you have reacted? Although gossip is generally considered unacceptable and a negative force, it can be a tool for managers and employees. Make a list of at least four benefits and four negative consequences of workplace gossip. Be prepared to explain and defend each item.

ANS:

Mr. Bender responded in an appropriate manner by going to the source and talking about the reason behind the gossip. Experts suggest seeking the source of malicious gossip and documenting what was learned or discussed.

Benefits of workplace gossip might include the following:

- a. Managers can monitor what is happening by relying on information from employees who are known for spreading office gossip.
- b. Managers can learn about morale, turnover, and productivity problems.
- c. Managers can plant news that they want to spread. For example, if layoffs are approaching, managers might soften the blow by letting rumours start about future layoffs.
- d. Gossip can be helpful in building office friendships and teamwork morale.
- e. Gossip can benefit new employees who are learning office customs not covered in the official company handbook.

Negative consequences of gossip might include the following:

- a. People who gossip are considered untrustworthy and may not be promoted.
- b. Malicious, false gossip can create severe unhappiness and destroy careers.
- c. Malicious gossip creates an ugly work environment, forcing people to leave.
- d. People who spend excessive amounts of time gossiping are a productivity drain on the company.
- e. Companies that do not prevent malicious gossip may be sued for tolerating or condoning a hostile work environment.

Analysis: Informal Communication Channels

11. LO6: Why are ethics in the workplace needed now more than ever?

ANS:

Ethics continues to be a hot topic in business and political circles. Recent media reports seem to have an increased focus on workplace or business ethics. Reports cover not only issues of workplace corruption, fraud, influence peddling, and cronyism but also ethical questions relating to policies on human rights, animal welfare, genetic engineering, relations with developing nations, and the environment. Business communicators should understand basic ethical principles

so they can make logical decisions when faced with dilemmas in the workplace. Professionals in any field must deal with moral dilemmas on the job.

Analysis: Ethics in the Workplace Is Needed More Than Ever

12. LO6: Professionals in any field deal with moral dilemmas on the job. However, just being a moral person and having sound personal or professional ethics may not be sufficient to handle the ethical issues you may face in the workplace. Consider the following ethical dilemmas:

- a. **Presentation** You are rushing to prepare a presentation. On the Internet you find perfect wording and great graphics. Should you lift the graphics and wording but change a few words? You figure that if it is on the Internet, it must be in the public domain.
- b. **Customer e-mail** You are replying to an e-mail from a customer who is irate over a mistake you made. Should you blame it on a computer glitch, point the finger at another department, or take the blame and risk losing this customer's trust and possibly your job?

For each scenario, consider the five questions to guide ethical decisions, as shown in Figure 1.13.

ANS:

Students should apply each question from Figure 1.13: Five Questions to Guide Ethical Decisions and explain their answers in relation to the dilemma.

Analysis: Doing What Ethical Communicators Do

Solutions to Case Connections Questions

1. The Loop Initiative responds to the climate emergency in Canada. How can other Canadian companies incorporate ethical decision making regarding the environment into their daily business practices?

ANS:

Students will discuss of range of topics, depending on current events relating to the climate emergency. Companies can incorporate ethical decision making into their daily business practices through environmentally sustainable initiatives and partnerships, local sourcing, and reduction of water, energy, and one-time-use packaging. Companies need to be innovative and, in some cases, rethink their product and production to reduce environmental harm.

Solutions to Chapter Review Questions

1. What employability skills are Canadian employers looking for in an employee? (Obj. 1)

ANS:

Employability skills include the following soft skills:

- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Teamwork skills

Students may also discuss the employability and soft skills listed in the unit opener:

Oral and Written Communication	✓
Information Management	✓
Critical Thinking	✓
Problem Solving	✓
Active Listening	✓
Professional Work Behaviours	✓
Goal-Setting	✓

Agility	✓
Adaptability	✓
Personal and Social Responsibility	✓
Ethical Decision Making	✓
Engagement	✓
Innovation and Creativity	✓
Learning Worker Attitude	✓
Team Building	✓
Accountability	✓
Project Collaboration	✓
Online Tools and Social Media	✓

2. Why are critical thinking skills increasingly important in today's workplace?
(Obj. 2)

ANS:

Jobs that require thinking, brainpower, and decision-making skills are likely to remain plentiful. To be successful in these jobs, employers expect you to be able to think critically, make decisions, and communicate those decisions. This includes having opinions that are backed by reasons and evidence.

3. How are tech-savvy companies using social media and other digital tools?
(Obj. 3)

ANS:

Tech-savvy companies are embracing digital tools to connect with consumers, invite feedback, and improve their products and services. They may announce promotions and events in blog posts, in tweets, on their company websites, and in online communities. To manage public perceptions, businesses know they must be proactive but also respond promptly within social media networks when a crisis hits.

4. What is the *gig economy*, and why are employers seeking agile workers? (Obj. 3)

ANS:

Gig economy refers to when workers are expected to work contract to contract for various employers or organizations. In order to adapt to change, many employers opt for a staffing model that includes nontraditional workers (self-employed, independent contractors, and contingent workers) who are agile and adaptable. Agile workers need to possess knowledge and skills, but they also need to be well organized and adaptable, with a breadth of experience to thrive in the gig economy.

5. Describe the five steps in the process of communication. (Obj. 4)

ANS:

The five steps of the communication process are as follows:

- a. The sender has an idea.
- b. The sender encodes a message.
- c. A channel carries the message.
- d. The receiver decodes the message.
- e. Feedback returns to the sender.

6. Name and explain four barriers to communication. What other barriers have you experienced? (Obj. 4)

ANS:

Four barriers to interpersonal communication include the following:

- a. Bypassing. People misunderstand because words have different meanings for individuals.
- b. Frame of reference. Everyone screens perception through different cultural, educational, and social filters.
- c. Lack of language skill. Individuals without adequate language skills have difficulty encoding and decoding messages.
- d. Distractions. Emotional distractions include such feelings as happiness, anger, and sadness. Physical distractions include acoustics, noisy surroundings, poor printing, careless formatting, sloppy appearance, and poor proofreading. All distractions create noise in the communication process and disrupt transmission.

Invite students to share additional personal and work examples of barriers to communication.

7. What are five advantages of oral communication within an organization? (Obj. 5)

ANS:

Students can refer to Figure 1.8 to review the advantages. Oral communication provides immediate feedback, can be adjusted to the audience, can be delivered quickly, supplies nonverbal cues, may create a warm feeling, and can be powerful.

8. Compare formal and informal channels of communication within organizations. Which is more valuable to employees? (Obj. 5)

ANS:

Formal channels of communication include such tools as staff meetings, intranet announcements and posts, e-mail, newsletters, public announcements, voice mail, videos, blogs, and podcasts. Informal channels of communication include the grapevine, which carries unofficial information. Employees prefer to receive organization news through formal channels, which are more credible and reliable.

9. What are seven goals of ethical business communicators? (Obj. 6)

ANS:

- a. Abide by the law.

- b. Tell the truth.
- c. Label opinions.
- d. Be objective.
- e. Communicate clearly.
- f. Use inclusive language.
- g. Give credit.

10. When you are faced with a difficult ethical decision, what questions should you ask yourself? (Obj. 6)

ANS:

- a. Is the action legal?
- b. How would I see the problem if I were on the opposite side?
- c. What are alternative solutions?
- d. Can I discuss the problem with someone whose advice I trust?
- e. How would I feel if my family, friends, employer, or coworkers learned of my action?

Solutions to Critical Thinking Questions

1. Can workers today be successful if their writing is and remains poor? What could be the career fallout for someone who is unwilling or unable to train to become a better communicator? (Obj. 1)

ANS:

Each of us probably knows at least one example of a highly successful person with a learning disability or a poor writer who is admired and thrives in the world of work. However, such cases are the exception rather than the rule. Surveys of employers find over and over again that young job applicants who are woefully unprepared to be good writers fall behind in their careers and are not promoted—if they are even hired in the first place.

2. Sharing on various digital media impulsively can lead to embarrassment and worse. Have you or has someone you know ever regretted posting a comment, photo, or other digital media online? What happened as a result of the post? (Obj. 2)

ANS:

Some students may be too embarrassed to admit to serious blunders on the Internet, whereas others may be willing to share. Ask students how such slip-ups could affect their chances at finding employment. In addition, in the networked professional environment of the digital era, one must manage and guard your reputation—at the office and online. How one presents oneself in the virtual world (meaning how well one communicates and protects one's "brand") may very well determine how successful one's career will be. Thoughtful blog posts, astute comments on LinkedIn and Facebook, and competent e-mails will help a candidate make a positive impression.

3. Some experts believe that although computer technology is improving our lives in many ways, it might be impairing our ability to think critically by putting answers at our fingertips. What do you think? (Obj. 3)

ANS:

Students can share their personal experiences with technology and how it affects their lives and learning. Most of this generation's students cannot comprehend a time when content was not so readily available on smartphones or computers. Many will argue that being connected to technology is convenient, provides access to a wealth of materials, and allows for a range of perspectives on topics. Others will caution that a quick online answer does not promote critical thinking and, in some cases, leads to confirmation bias and very little personal growth. This question provides an opportunity to discuss using critical thinking when assessing the credibility of online sources.

4. Critics complain that texting and instant messaging lead to textspeak, poor writing characterized by acronyms, abbreviations, and emoticons. Others have claimed that emoji help supply important missing cues in lean media channels that are "toneless" otherwise.⁶⁷ What do you think? (Obj. 5)

ANS:

An article in *The Atlantic* cites a sociolinguist who says that emoticons and emoji are revolutionizing language and add intention to a statement in e-mail, a lean medium. In the absence of tone in e-mail and other lean media, people tend to read a negative tone into it. Emoticons make for a more cheerful, friendly communication, the sociolinguist says. A Scandinavian study found that emoticons

reduce negative interpretations. In addition, even work e-mail is becoming more casual and emoticons more acceptable. However, emoticons and emoji should not be used with superiors or clients. Warn students that they will not find uniform acceptance when using nonstandard expressions of this kind. Young office workers need to consider their audience.

Source:

Lam, B. (2015, May 15). Why emoji are suddenly acceptable at work. *The Atlantic*.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/05/why-emoji-are-suddenly-acceptable-at-work/393191>.

5. Ethical Issue: Your company urgently needs a revenue-producing project. Should you submit a proposal that unrealistically suggests a short completion schedule to ensure that you get the job? Provide a rationale for your decision. (Obj. 6)

ANS:

Students should apply each question from Figure 1.13: Five Questions to Guide Ethical Decisions and explain their answers in relation to the dilemma.

Activities Solutions

1.1 Assessing Communication Skills Online: Evaluate Your Skills (Objs. 1–3)

This course can help you dramatically improve your business communication skills. How much do you need to improve? This assessment exercise enables you to evaluate your skills with specific standards in four critical communication skill areas: writing, reading, speaking, and listening. How well you communicate will be an important factor in your future career—particularly if you are promoted into management, as many college and university graduates are.

YOUR TASK For each of the following skills, select a number from 1 (indicating low ability) to 5 (indicating high ability) that best reflects your perception of yourself. Be honest in rating yourself. Think about how others would rate you. When you finish, see a rating of your skills. Complete this assessment online to see your results automatically!

Writing Skills

	Low					High
1. Possess basic spelling, grammar, and punctuation skills	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Am familiar with proper e-mail, memo, letter, and report	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Can analyze a writing problem and quickly outline a plan for	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Am able to organize data coherently and logically	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Can evaluate a document to determine its probable success	1	2	3	4	5	

Reading Skills

1. Am familiar with specialized vocabulary in my field, as well as	1	2	3	4	5
2. Can concentrate despite distractions	1	2	3	4	5
3. Am willing to look up definitions whenever necessary	1	2	3	4	5
4. Am able to move from recreational to serious reading	1	2	3	4	5
5. Can read and comprehend college-level material	1	2	3	4	5

Speaking Skills

1. Feel at ease in speaking with friends	1	2	3	4	5
2. Feel at ease in speaking before a group of people	1	2	3	4	5
3. Can adapt my presentation to the audience	1	2	3	4	5
4. Am confident in pronouncing and using words correctly	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sense that I have credibility when I make a presentation	1	2	3	4	5

Listening Skills

1. Spend at least half the time listening during conversations	1	2	3	4	5
2. Am able to concentrate on a speaker's words despite	1	2	3	4	5
3. Can summarize a speaker's ideas and anticipate what's	1	2	3	4	5
4. Provide proper feedback, such as nodding, paraphrasing,	1	2	3	4	5
5. Listen with the expectation of gaining new ideas and	1	2	3	4	5

Total your score in each section. How do you rate?

22–25 Excellent! You have indicated that you have exceptional communication skills.

18–21 Your score is above average, but you could improve your skills.

14–17 Your score suggests that you have much room for improvement.

5–13 You recognize that you need serious study, practice, and follow-up reinforcement.

Where are you strongest and weakest?

Are you satisfied with your present skills? The first step to improvement is recognition of a need. The second step is making a commitment to improve. The third step is following through, and this course will help you do that.

ANS:

Reassure students that no matter what their scores, they can still succeed in your course. Encourage them to recognize their shortcomings in order to improve. After having them choose the traits they intend to work on immediately, encourage them to begin an action plan and record their progress in a journal detailing daily what they have done to improve their communication skills.

1.2 Social Media Inventory (Objs. 1–5)

The millennials (those born after 1985) do not remember a time without computer technology and cell phones in wide use. People born in the 1990s and since have only known a society that depends on the Internet and mobile technology. Social media are second nature to most young people.

You too may live, learn, work, play, network, and shop in the digital world; your daily life depends on technology because your electronics are increasingly networked.

YOUR TASK Take stock of your Internet, social media, and other technology use. First establish useful criteria—for example, categories such as consumer electronics, social networking sites, preferred modes of communication with friends and family, and so forth. Within each category, list the technology you use most frequently. For instance, for social media networks, indicate your use of Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube, Hulu, LinkedIn, and more. How do you use each? How often do you access these sites per day and on which tools (e.g., smartphone, tablet, laptop)? How much do you text every day? Your instructor may ask you to create at least three categories, record your responses in writing, and compare your lists with a group of classmates. Your instructor may ask you to summarize your observations about how plugged in you and your classmates are in a post on a discussion board or in an e-mail.

ANS:

The generalization that young people today are digital natives and as such must all be extremely tech savvy may not apply equally to all students, not even the millennials and Generation Zs among them. Taking stock of students' social media and technology use can be important for getting to know the class and its members' preparedness. Assign the inventory activity to small groups or collect written responses from individuals if you fear that students might hesitate to admit that they do not fit the stereotype of the hyperconnected contemporary and do not own the latest electronics, particularly given that gadgets tend to be expensive. You may also want to ask about attitudes: how important are smartphones and staying connected with friends via text or Facebook to the students? Do they see any disadvantages in being connected nonstop?

1.3 Introducing Yourself (Objs. 1, 2)

Your instructor wants to know more about you, your motivation for taking this course, your career goals, and your writing skills.

YOUR TASK Send an e-mail or write a memo of introduction to your instructor. See Chapters 7 and 8 for tips on preparing an e-mail message. In your message include the following:

- a. Your reasons for taking this class
- b. Your career goals (both temporary and long term)
- c. A brief description of your employment, if any, and your favourite activities
- d. An assessment and a discussion of your current communication skills, including your strengths and weaknesses

Alternatively, your instructor may ask you to (a) create a profile for LinkedIn, the business-oriented social networking site, or (b) develop a profile within a learning-management system (e.g., Blackboard and Moodle) to introduce yourself to your classmates. If yours is a small class, your instructor may challenge you to compose your introduction in Twitter posts of 140 or fewer characters.

ANS:

This e-mail or memo is an excellent way to assess students' skills and, at the same time, get to know them. Don't grade this assignment, but be sure to write a friendly comment on all papers or in all e-mail replies to demonstrate that you have an interest in them as students and as individuals.

You may want to use the profile function in your institution's learning-management system to request that students create a professional profile covering the information requested or additional information you may want to gather. This assignment may be revisited later in the term to practice professional online presence (e.g., in a LinkedIn profile) when you cover employment communication. If you are tech-savvy and teach smaller classes, you may want to try introductions by tweet in 140 characters or fewer. These messages might include a tiny URL taking the recipient to a profile, website, or other virtual location. More information about using LinkedIn is provided in Chapter 15.

1.4 Small-Group Presentation: Introducing Team Members (Objs. 1, 2)

Many business organizations today use teams to accomplish their goals. To help you develop speaking, listening, and teamwork skills, your instructor may assign team projects. One of the first jobs in any team is selecting members and becoming acquainted.

YOUR TASK Your instructor will divide your class into small groups or teams. At your instructor's direction, either (a) interview another group member and introduce that person to the group or (b) introduce yourself to the group. Think of this as an informal interview for a team assignment or a job. You will want to make notes from which to speak. Your introduction should include information such as the following:

- a. Where did you grow up?
- b. What work and extracurricular activities have you engaged in?
- c. What are your interests and talents? What are you good at doing?
- d. What are your professional and personal goals? Where do you expect to be five years from now?
- e. Name one thing about you that others might not guess when first meeting you.

To develop listening skills, team members should practise good listening techniques (see Chapter 2) and take notes. They should be prepared to discuss three important facts and remember details about each speaker.

Alternatively, you could be asked to write a short professional biographical blurb after your interview of a group member. After feedback to ensure that it is correct, discuss with your partner or the whole group whether the bio would be attractive

to employers looking for communication skills and other employability skills as presented in this chapter.

ANS:

Decide whether you wish your class to (a) interview a group member and introduce that person to the group or (b) have each class member introduce themselves to the entire class. Class size may help you decide. Encourage students to consider this a casual introduction. However, it is a good opportunity for students to not only learn about each other but also start to develop the skills needed to speak in front of a group.

The informal oral assignment induces students to start thinking about their employability skills. It could be more structured by asking students to write the information they find out in the interview to create a short biographical sketch. The purpose is to have them start thinking about their professional presentations of themselves and others on professional social media sites such as LinkedIn and in other forums of public opinion. If students are not on LinkedIn yet, explain to them that it's about time they created an account!

1.5 Writing Skills: But My Job Won't Require Writing! (Objs. 1–3)

Some job candidates experience a disconnect between what they expect to be doing in their career fields and what they actually will do.

YOUR TASK In teams or as a class, discuss the accuracy of the following statements. Are they myths or facts?

- a. No one really writes anymore. They just text and send e-mails.
- b. Because I'm in a technical field, I will work with numbers, not words.
- c. Administrative assistants will clean up my writing problems.
- d. Today's sophisticated software programs can fix any of my writing mistakes.

ANS:

a. No one really writes anymore. They just text and send e-mails.
Everyone writes in today's workplace—and probably more than people ever did in the past. In professional workplaces e-mail has become the most important communication channel. Texting is less important. Regardless, all messages sent in the workplace must be businesslike and effective. This means they should be clear,

concise, courteous, complete, and correct. They are indeed “real” writing and require more skill and preparation than e-mail and texting to friends. What’s more, as companies grow larger and become less cohesive, the written word becomes even more important. Because fewer people are working side by side, written messages replace face-to-face conversation. Those who can craft clear messages will be most successful.

b. Because I'm in a technical field, I will work with numbers, not words.

Estimates suggest that nearly 90 percent of all business messages involve written communication. Conducting business in any field—even in technical and specialized areas such as information technology, accounting, engineering, marketing, and hotel management—involves some writing. “You can have the greatest technical skills in the world, but without solid communication skills, who will know and can understand?” said Kevin Jetton, executive vice president of the Association of Information Technology Professionals. Moreover, when individuals are promoted, their writing tasks increase.

c. Administrative assistants will clean up my writing problems.

In the current work world of tightened budgets and economic downturn, only a few upper-level executives still have administrative assistants who type their messages. Most managers and executives now write their own e-mails, memos, and letters.

d. Today’s sophisticated software programs can fix any of my writing mistakes. Today’s style-, grammar-, and spell-checkers are wonderful aids to business writers. They can highlight selected trouble areas and occasionally suggest revisions. What they can’t do, though, is organize and write the document and ensure its total accuracy. These tools are also not capable of catching all errors, especially commonly confused words and punctuation.

Source (part b):

Jacobs, P. (1998, July 6). Strong writing skills essential for success. *InfoWorld*, p. 86.

1.6 Oral or Written Communication: How Rich Must the Media Be? (Obj. 5)

YOUR TASK First decide whether the following messages need to be communicated orally or in writing. After consulting the media richness diagram in Figure 1.9, consider how rich the medium must be in each communication situation to convey the message most appropriately and reliably. You may want

to choose channels such as e-mail, letter, report, texting, instant messaging, telephone call, live chat, teleconferencing, face-to-face conversation, or team meeting. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of each choice.

- a. You are returning with the senior auditor from a client visit to company headquarters, where you must attend an important department meeting. It looks as though you will be at least 15 minutes late. What are your options?
- b. Maya, the information technology vice president, must tell employees about a new company social media policy. She has two employees in mind who particularly need this information.
- c. As a manager in your Human Resources Department, you must terminate three employees in a companywide initiative to reduce costs.

ANS:

a. Text, e-mail, or possibly call if it's not going to disrupt the meeting, depending on the importance of the meeting and your role in it. As a junior member of the team, you would want to call to provide immediate feedback, adjust to the audience, and deliver your message quickly. A telephone call is not as rich a medium as a face-to-face encounter but comes closer than a text message or e-mail in conveying positive emotion and a personal approach.

b. Policies flowing downward from management to subordinates should be written. They produce a permanent record, are economical, promote comprehension and recall, allow precise and uniform expression, and give the audience flexibility in when and how to receive the content. Although Maya has two employees in mind, the policy should be directed to all employees, most likely in an e-mail or intranet post.

c. Messages as traumatic as termination should always be delivered in person—one-on-one or with a limited number of participants. Oral communication provides immediate feedback, can be adjusted to the audience, supplies nonverbal cues, and shows greater compassion than a written message.

Grammar & Mechanics Solutions

1. Because you will be entering a fast-paced competitive, and highly connected digital **environment, communication** and technology skills are critical to your career success. [b, Guide 1, Fragment]

2. Such skills are particularly significant **now when** jobs are scarce and competition is keen. [b, Guide 1, Fragment]
3. Many qualified people will apply for **openings; however**, candidates with exceptional communication skills will immediately stand out. [c, Guide 3, Comma splice. Use a semicolon or start a new sentence with *However*.]
4. Although we cannot predict the kinds of future jobs that will be available, they will undoubtedly require brainpower and education. [a, Correctly punctuated]
5. In traditional companies decisions must move through many levels of **managers; in** flat organizations decisions can be made more quickly. [c, Guide 3, Comma splice. Use a semicolon or start a new sentence with *In*.]
6. Millions of workers no longer report to nine-to-five **jobs thanks** largely to advances in new technologies and wireless Internet access. [b, Guide 1, Fragment]
7. Nearly all potential employers said that being able to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than a candidate's program of study. [a, Correctly punctuated]
8. The grapevine can be a powerful source of **information, although** it increasingly operates informally through social media. [b, Guide 1, Fragment]
9. Ethical companies experience less litigation, and they also are the target of less government regulation. [a, Correctly punctuated]
10. Even when an action is **legal, it** may violate generally accepted principles of right and wrong. [b, Guide 1, Fragment]

CHAPTER 1 TEACHING SUGGESTIONS AND RESOURCES

Business Communication in the Digital Age

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Today's workplace is undergoing significant changes, including global competition, flattened management hierarchies, heightened ethical expectations, growing workforce diversity, and the increased use of teams to accomplish organizational goals. In addition, new electronic technologies, flexible work environments, the gig economy, agile workers, the global pandemic, and a diverse workforce are creating dramatic changes in how and where we work. Job candidates and employees with excellent communication skills have the best chance of being hired and experiencing career advancement.

Communication, the transmission of information and meaning from one individual or group to another, has as its central objective the transmission of *meaning*. The process of communication is successful only when the receiver understands an idea as the sender intended it. Often communication is impeded by barriers that distort the message. Students should recognize the types of barriers that interfere with communication and take steps to reduce them.

In this chapter students will also learn how to compare and contrast internal and external functions of communication, formal and informal communication channels, and oral and written communication. This chapter concludes with a summary of the goals of ethical business communicators and provides practical guidelines for making ethical decisions and addressing wrongdoing in the workplace.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain how communication skills fuel career success, and understand why writing skills are vital in a digital, mobile, and social media-driven workplace.
2. Identify the skills for success in the hyperconnected 21st-century workplace and competitive job market.
3. Describe significant trends and technologies in today's dynamic work environment.
4. Understand the nature of communication and its barriers.
5. Examine critically the flow of communication in organizations, explain the importance of effective media choices, and understand how to overcome typical barriers to organizational communication.

6. Analyze ethics in the workplace, understand the goals of ethical business communicators, and choose the tools for doing the right thing.

FEATURES IN THIS CHAPTER

- Reflects the pervasive influence of new communication technology on business writing to prepare students for the digital-age workplace
- Now includes Concept Check questions for each Learning Objective to reinforce and enhance student comprehension
- Updated Canadian Tire and Myant, Inc. case study: Parts 1 and 2
- Presents state-of-the-art research arguing the prominence of writing and other communication skills in the thoroughly networked, hyperconnected workplace
- Devotes much attention to social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Twitter to impress upon students that writing is more important than ever in the digital world because of the global reach and repeatability of digital messages
- Demonstrates how the explosive growth of social media networks, particularly Twitter, is changing the global landscape and shaping today's communication in the digital-era workplace
- Information about the concept of the "learning worker"
- New Figure 1.3: Lilly Singh, Canadian YouTube Influencer
- New information about the gig economy and agile workers
- New Figure 1.4: Canadians' Internet Usage
- Updated Figure 1.5: Communication and Collaborative Technologies
- New Figure 1.6: Top Five Attributes of Agile Workers
- New information on virtual and nonterritorial offices
- New information on the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic
- Draws on the latest statistics and examples to provide students with current practices in business and to offer advice on adapting their skill sets
- Includes coverage of media richness and social presence to help readers to better grasp which communication channels are best suited for particular situations and purposes, ranging from face-to-face interactions (rich) to bulk e-mail, posters, and flyers (lean)
- Includes helpful graphics illustrating key concepts for visual learners
- Offers new activities for the end-of-chapter items, including fresh, contemporary scenarios that foster student learning
- Provides several updated end-of-chapter activities addressing the use of social media and reflecting the pre-eminence of writing in the digital workplace by prompting students to inventory their social media use, employ communication technology to introduce themselves, and choose the most appropriate media for several communication situations

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Making It Relevant

In the first few weeks of classes, some students may be resistant to attending a Communications course. As instructors, we know that writing, reading, and speaking skills are essential to students' success in the workplace, and the best way to reduce resistance is by making the course content relevant to all learners.

According to The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (2014), "[t]hrough extensive research, the Government of Canada, along with other national and international agencies, has identified and validated Key Literacy and Essential Skills. These skills are used in nearly every job and throughout daily life in different ways and at varying levels of complexity."

Communication skills make up the majority of the literacy and essential skills that employers demand on the job: reading, writing, document use, numeracy, computer use, thinking, oral communication, working with others, and continuous learning (The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, 2014). Students can feel confident that this textbook will develop their literacy and essential skills for success in the workplace.

Literacy and Essential Skills

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/essential-skills.html>

You can introduce literacy and essentials skills to your students by showing them a short video from The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills. See Essential Skills Videos at

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/essential-skills/video.html>.

Interactive Lectures: Let's Discuss

The following questions are designed to promote critical thinking and encourage lively discussions in the classroom. Student responses will vary; some suggested answers are provided.

- 1. Why do you think writing has become so important to today's employees and employers?**

Businesspeople today are doing more writing than ever before. E-mail, virtual teams, telecommuting, and participatory (collaborative) management all mean that more messages are being written.

- 2. Creating a diverse work environment makes good business sense. Why is it important to have diversity among senior levels of management?**

Hiring managers recognize the importance of diversity among higher ranks of the organization. A management team made up of a diverse staff—including women and minorities—helps companies attract and retain a diverse work force. Plus, it's important for minority and female employees to see role models to whom they can go for advice, counsel, and mentoring.

- 3. What is the most ethical response to the following situation?**

Assume that you have been hired as a telephone sales representative for a pharmaceutical sales company. You are expected to make 150 sales calls every day to doctor's offices across Canada to assess their interest for a new arthritis drug. Your newly hired colleague, who must also make 150 sales calls per day, secretly reveals to you that he dials the same number repeatedly so he can meet his daily goal. Your boss calls you into her office and asks your opinion on the performance of your new colleague. Do you share his secret?

Making ethical decisions can be challenging. Loyalty to both your boss and your colleague may create some confusion and uncertainty about how to respond to your boss's question. However, your goal is to be objective and tell the truth. Use the information about ethics and doing the right thing on pages 23 to 26 to help make an ethical decision.

- 4. When is it better to communicate by speaking versus writing?**

It is better to communicate by speaking, in-person or over the phone, when you need to clarify information or make a decision. This type of communication allows for a two-way conversation. It is better to communicate in writing (memo or e-mail) when you need a written record or when the information is extensive (report). It is also better to communicate in writing if you want to give someone time to think about an idea or request (proposal).

- 5. What is your biggest communication challenge? Writing? Public speaking? Listening? Think of three to five strategies you can use to improve this area.**

Suggested strategies:

Writing

- Get a tutor or editor.
- Do online writing lab and grammar exercises.
- Leave lots of time for writing assignments.
- Complete several drafts.

Public Speaking

- Prepare and practise.
- Use calming techniques (meditating, running, listening to music, etc.).
- Speak to a counsellor about ways to minimize anxiety.
- Find resources (articles and videos) to increase confidence, such as Amy Cuddy's TED Talk about power posing.

Listening

- Minimize distractions.
- Use note-taking strategies.
- Practise body language that demonstrates active listening.
- Recall the content soon afterward to remember key ideas; write them down if necessary.

6. What can organizations do to promote communication skills in the workplace?

The following excerpt from a *Communication World* article shows what FedEx Canada does to promote communication skills.

Putting Words Into Action: Valuing Communication at FedEx Canada

Some practices adopted by FedEx Canada to demonstrate that the company values good communication are as follows:

- **Management communication training** involving practical workshops, including role-playing, to assist managers in tackling challenging workplace communication situations
- **Media training** for employees at all levels of the company, including couriers, subject matter experts, and senior executives
- **Public speaking coaching** for employees who are on the speaking circuit
- **Annual Mercury Award** (named after the Roman messenger god) for excellent manager communicators. Frontline employees nominate their managers for this prestigious award.
- **Direct, regular access** to the president by the head of communication
- **Communication** as a component of annual managers' performance appraisal (50 percent performance against business objectives and 50 percent leadership skills, including communication)
- **Annual communication** survey for employees to rate communication tools and leaders' communication practices
- **"Survey-Feedback-Action,"** an annual employee survey done with FedEx worldwide, seeking opinions on everything from perceptions of immediate leaders (including their communication capabilities), to pay and benefits, to work environment, to senior leadership (including their communication capabilities). Managers get a report based on their work group feedback, and are required to have a discussion

about areas of weakness and develop an action plan to resolve them, which has to be signed off on by their own manager.

Spring, N. (2006). Delivering the message one person at a time. *Communication World*, 23(5), 20-23. Retrieved 13 January 2021. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Delivering+the+message+one+person+at+a+time%3a+EXCEL+Award+winner...a0150357838>

Classroom Activities

Topic Emphasis

Since this chapter is a building block for the rest of the course, stress students' comprehension of the learning objectives listed on page 2 of the text. Students should be able to (1) discuss the communication process, the barriers to interpersonal communication, and the means for overcoming them; (2) compare and contrast such concepts as internal and external functions of organizations, formal and informal communication channels, and oral and written communication; and (3) discuss the goals of ethical business communication and the tools for doing the right thing. Whenever possible, have students use examples from their personal experiences. When they demonstrate mastery of these tasks, they are ready to progress to Chapter 2.

Chapter Presentation Suggestions

At times, very simple exercises and discussion topics can drive home significant points. The following activities can be completed quickly, and they may even add a bit of humour!

1. *Importance of Communication Skills.* Bring to class a stack of classified ads from your local newspaper and/or printouts of job listings from employment websites such as Monster.ca. Divide the class into small teams, and give each team several pages of ads. Have each team find as many references to communication-related and essential skills as possible in the ads. When they are finished searching, have each team share its findings with the rest of the class. This is an excellent way for students to learn firsthand the importance of having good communication skills in the workplace.
2. *Understanding Barriers to Communication.* Allow students some time to reflect and then have them do the following:

Describe an instance of a major miscommunication between you and another person in a workplace or in school that resulted in anger, embarrassment, frustration, or pain for one or both of you.

After the student describes what happened, have the class analyze the event in terms of obstacles that create misunderstanding—bypassing, frame of reference, lack of

language skills, and distractions. What could the student have done to overcome the obstacles to clear communication in this instance? Help the class to see the event as an example of what happens to communication when one or more obstacles prevent mutual understanding and to see the relevance of these obstacles to their personal lives.

3. *“Faked” Listening.* Have students share examples of times when they “faked” listening and how their lack of attention affected the situation. These instances may involve situations when students did not give their parents, teachers, or employers their full attention.

Remind students that in their business lives, selective listening may result in serious consequences. When receiving directions for work assignments, they should take great care to listen actively, and they should paraphrase the instructions given to them by their supervisor back to the supervisor. If the supervisor accepts the paraphrase as accurate, the students may assume that they completely understand their work assignments.

4. *Emotional Interference.* Discuss with students how emotional interference can cloud their judgment. What would be the consequences of sending a coworker a negative e-mail message in the heat of anger, but then after cooling down, wanting to stop the individual from receiving the message? Discuss the lasting consequences of an angry text or e-mail message sent to a coworker or an angry voice mail message left for a coworker.
5. *Noise as a Barrier to Communication.* Physical distractions can take place during both written and oral communication (for example, *oral communication noise*—speaker’s mannerisms, poor lighting, uncomfortable chairs, uncomfortable room temperature, or construction noise; *written communication noise*—poor letter format, inappropriate stationery, punctuation errors, misspelled words, and grammatical errors). Have students discuss examples of these types of noise from their experiences or bring to class and discuss samples of written correspondence containing “noise.”
6. *Teamwork.* What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in a team? What are solutions to the challenges of working in a team? Recall a positive and negative team experience. What could have been done differently?
7. *LEGO Challenge.* Divide students into pairs (small groups if it’s a larger class). Give each pair two matching sets of LEGO pieces. The students will build a structure and write a set of instructions for it. They will then use the second set of pieces to build a replica and hide it away. They must write clear steps, and they may use illustrations but not an illustration of the completed structure. Then they will trade their instructions and the LEGO pieces with another team, which will attempt to build the structure and then provide feedback to improve the steps. Once the second team is done, they can look at

the original structure (the one that was hidden away) to see whether the two structures match. The team will use the feedback to revise their steps and illustrations.

NOTE: You could use this as an instructional memo assignment to teach business writing (clear and concise sentences, strong verbs), business formatting (headings, point form, bold), and memo format.

8. *Chapter Review, Critical Thinking, and Activities.* At the end of the chapter, several hands-on activities are available for students.

Online Class Activity

1. An online discussion forum activity is a great way for students to get to know one another in the first week of classes. Early interaction is essential for building a warm and welcoming online learning environment. The following activity allows students to get to know each other in a fun and interesting way.

Truths and Lies

<i>Task:</i>	Introductory exercise for the beginning of a course
<i>Objective:</i>	To introduce a student's interests and background to classmates in a fun and challenging way
<i>Author:</i>	Darek Jarmola, Ph.D., Oklahoma Wesleyan University, djarmola@okwu.edu
<i>Method:</i>	Asynchronous or synchronous

Instructions

Enter two truthful statements and one falsehood about yourself onto the discussion board (or in the chat room). Each member of the group should then try to distinguish the truths from the lie. What makes this activity fun is to be as outrageous as possible while sharing a bit of who you really are with your fellow participants. Once all responses have been received, post your truths and explain why you chose them to share.

Conrad, R. M. (2004). *Engaging the online learner: Activities and resources for creative instruction*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

2. Recall a workplace where you were employed that used an effective management structure. What worked and why? Recall a workplace that did not have effective management. What didn't work and why? Post your response. Reply to at least two other posts. NOTE: If you don't have workplace experience, you can instead create a list

of positive characteristics for management (e.g., understanding) and negative characteristics (e.g., controlling).

The Technology Link

With the current emphasis on technology in the work world, it is essential for business communicators to be able to use technology effectively to communicate. The exercises in this section will help students develop the technical skills they'll need to succeed.

1. *Importance of Communication Skills.* Divide the class into small teams of three or four students. Each team will search the job ads at employment websites for any references to communication-related skills. You can provide the students with the URLs or have each team use a search tool such as Google to find relevant sites. Suggestions for possible sites to use are listed below. When the students are finished searching, have each team share its findings with the rest of the class. This is an excellent way for students to learn firsthand the importance of having good communication skills in the workplace.

Possible Employment Sites

<https://www.monster.ca>
<https://www.careerbuilder.ca>
<https://www.workopolis.com>
<https://www.jobbank.gc.ca>
<https://www.linkedin.com>

Possible Search Tools

<http://www.google.ca>
<http://www.yahoo.com>
<https://www.ask.com>

2. *Digital Network/Class Mailing List.* Set up a digital network (such as Facebook or Twitter) or a mailing list (such as LinkedIn Groups) for the class to use throughout the semester. These tools can be used by students to ask questions, share resources, clarify assignments, set up study groups, or engage in any other communication outside of the classroom. To get students to use the digital networks or mailing lists right away, have them send/post an introduction of themselves. A good free tool for setting up mailing lists is LinkedIn Groups (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups>).

NOTE: You should set up the digital network or mailing list yourself before the semester begins. You can then collect student e-mail addresses and add students to the list yourself, or you can have students add themselves. Just follow all instructions on the LinkedIn Groups, Facebook, and Twitter sites.

3. *Class Discussion Board.* Set up an online discussion board for the class to use throughout the semester. You can set up topic areas on the board for students to ask questions, share Web resources, discuss relevant topics, and so on. If your college or university has a license for a course management program such as WebCT or Blackboard, you can use this tool's discussion-board feature. If you don't have access to such a software package,

you can access free discussion-board services online. A good place to start is <http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic101discuss.html>. Here you will find a wealth of information about how to use technological communication tools in your class.

4. *Employability Skills 2000⁺*. Explore the employability skills that the Conference Board of Canada identifies as being essential for the workplace: <https://conferenceboard.ca/edu/employability-skills.aspx>. Have students summarize the eight to ten most important for their industry.

NOTE: They could use these skills during the Job Search unit to provide specific examples in their cover letter, résumé, and job interview.

5. *Information Interview*. Ask students to interview a professional; preferably someone they admire and/or within a field in which they want to work. In-person interviews are preferred. They should ask the interviewee what types of communication skills are required for their job and within their field. Students should also ask for examples of dos and don'ts regarding e-mails, presentations, dress, meetings, phone calls and technology use at work. Students could report their findings in a presentation, journal entry, and/or short report.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

How to Give Interactive Lectures

Carlton University, Ottawa, Ontario

<https://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/interactive/howto.html>

This resource provides teaching strategies for engaging students through interactive lectures.

6 Millennial Habits That Shape Workplace Technology

<https://www.itweapons.com/millennial-habit-workplace-technology>

This resource provides excellent information about how Millennials function in today's hyperconnected workplace.