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BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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HAVE NO FEAR!
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Using **SOCIAL MEDIA**
To Your Professional Advantage

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Third Edition

business communication

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business communication

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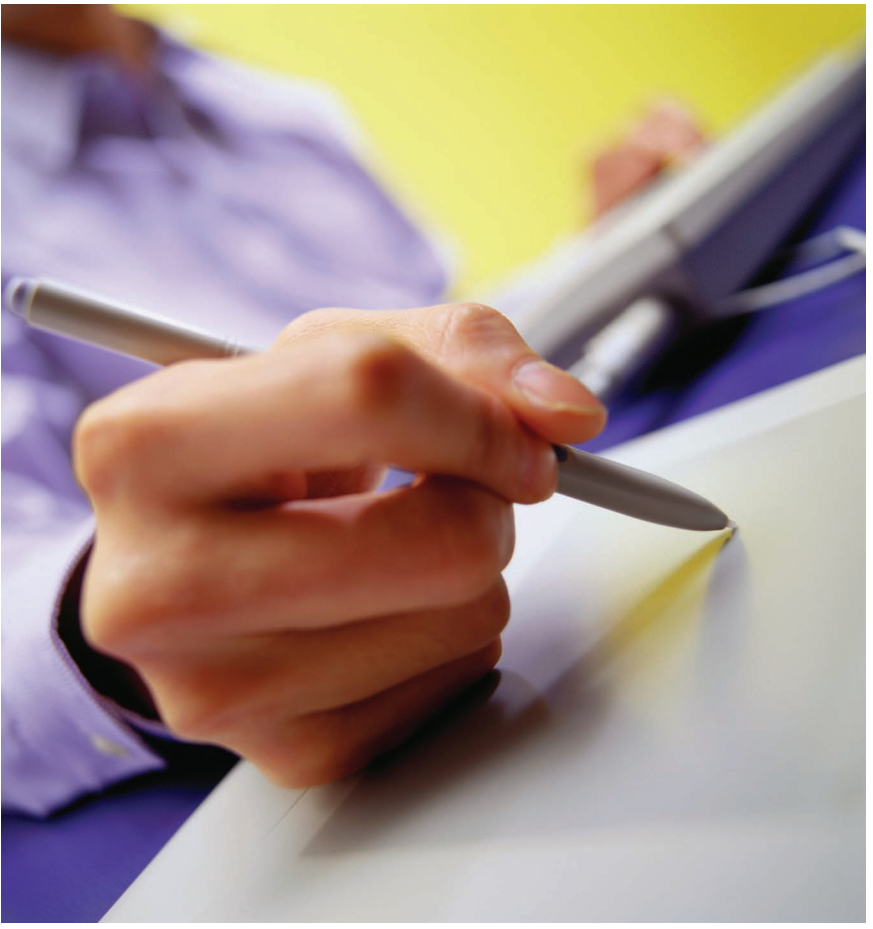

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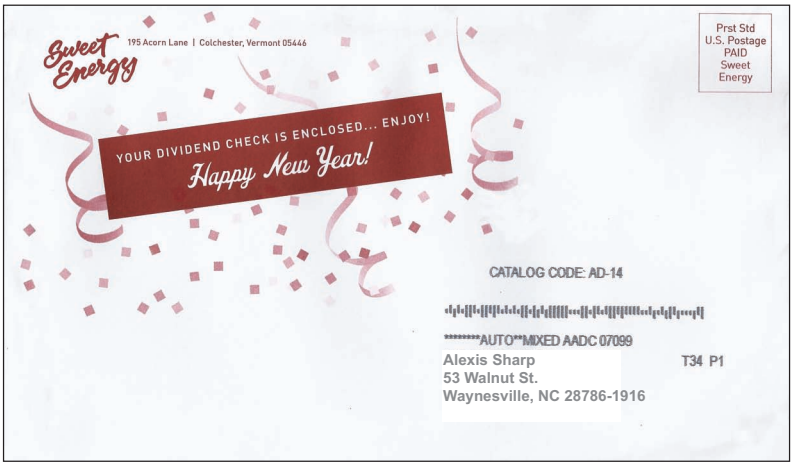

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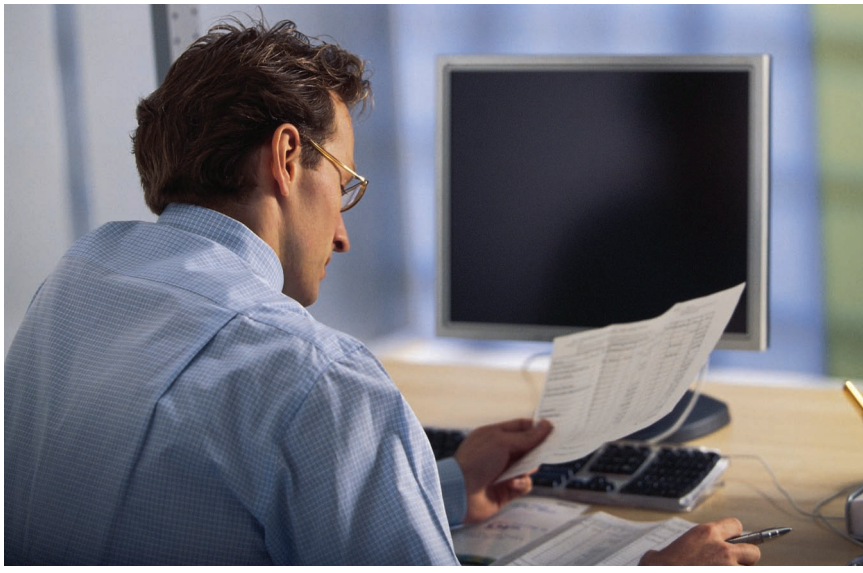

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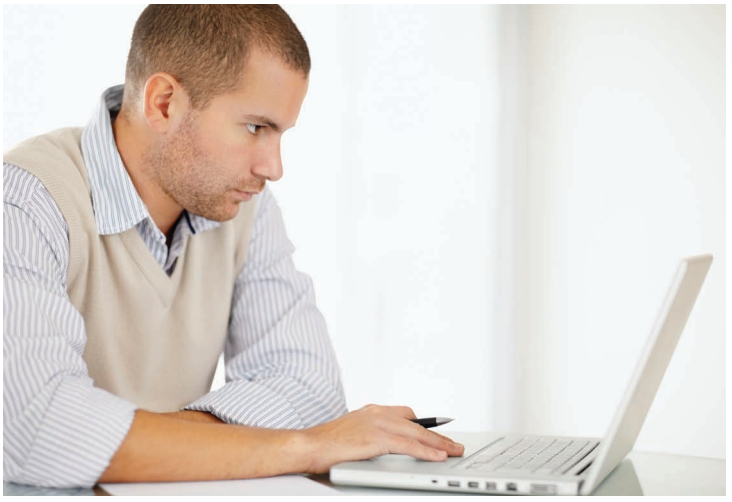

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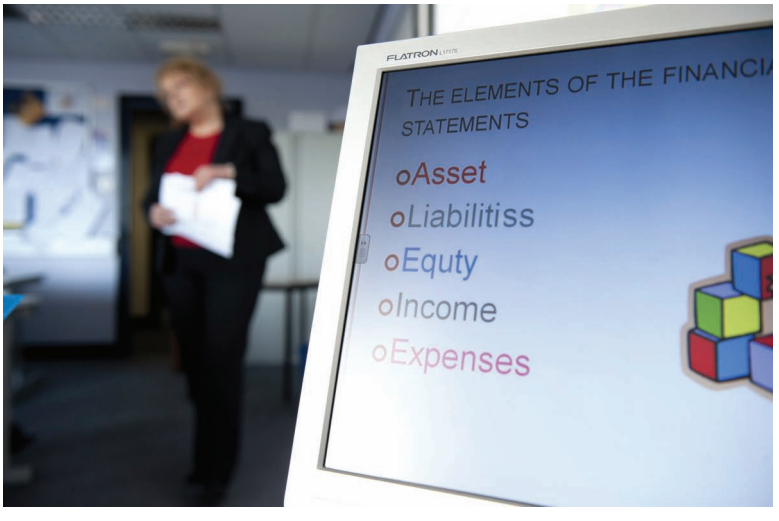

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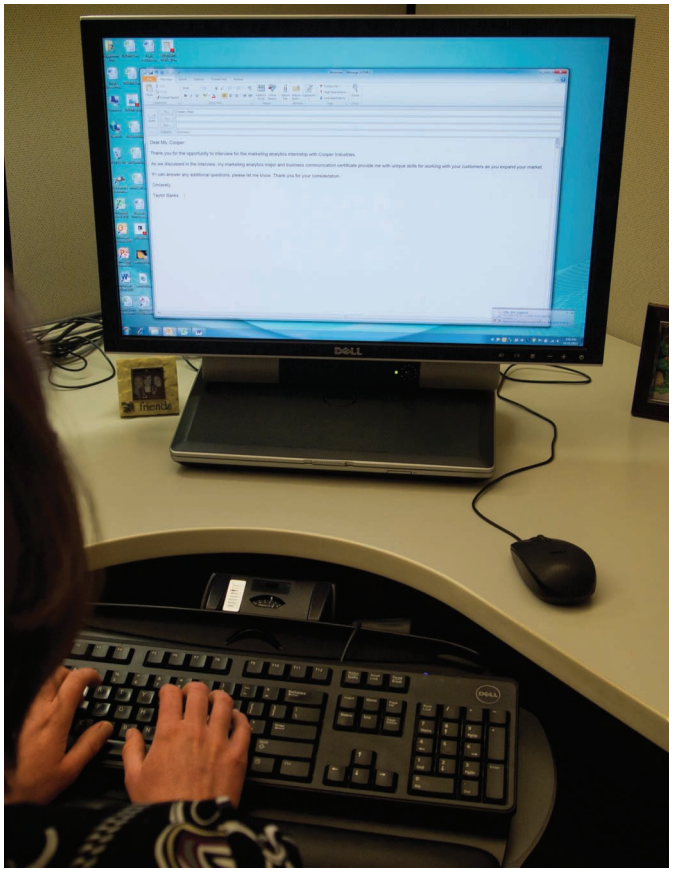

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chapter changes

CHAPTER 1

- Latest evidence of the importance of communication skills in business.
- Current research on the skills needed in the 21st-century workplace.
- New boxed features: "Demonstrating Your Value on a High-Profile Team," "This Just In: What You Can Do Is Even More Important than What You Know," "Why Companies Promote Workplace Diversity," "What's the Dominant Metaphor in *Your* Workplace?"
- Updated photos and exhibits.

CHAPTER 2

- Current advice on letter writing, particularly on avoiding the use of greetings such as "to whom it may concern" and other outdated expressions.
- Updated advice on current email practices in the workplace and on the role of email among other communication technologies such as text and instant messaging.
- Expanded information on text and instant messaging and social media communication as forms of business messages.
- New advice on preparing print vs. online documents and discussion of best practices for writing Web content.

CHAPTER 3

- Use of "visuals" rather than "graphics" to better reflect the wide range of options for visual communication.
- Emphasis on visuals as communication tools.
- Many new visuals to illustrate common types used in business communication.

CHAPTER 4

- New boxed features: "Writing with Clarity and Courtesy," "The Most Annoying Business Clichés," "Don't Be Hoodwinked by Homophones," "Understanding the Different Generations in the Workplace," "Beware the Vague or Illogical *This*," "Courtesy in the Age of Mobile Devices."
- A more logically organized section on selecting appropriate words.
- Clearer advice about using sentence structure (e.g., coordination and subordination) to manage emphasis.
- New sections on being courteous and on determining the right level of formality.

CHAPTER 5

- New "Workplace Scenario" that uses a running narrative of routine communication scenarios at White Label Industries. This provides an opportunity for instructors to simulate communication situations in a single company, creating a consistent scenario for addressing audience, context, and communication goals within an organization.
- New Case Illustration examples.
- New boxed features: "Choosing the Right Font," "A Workplace without Email? One Company's Strategy."
- Over 30 new or revised problem-solving cases (online).

CHAPTER 6

- Opportunity to continue use of the White Label Industries narrative from Chapter 5 for bad-news messages.
- New "Workplace Scenarios" throughout the chapter.
- New Case Illustrations of bad-news messages written in the indirect approach: a refused request to an external audience, a refused request to an internal audience, and a negative announcement.
- Over 30 revised or new problem-solving cases (online).

CHAPTER 7

- New boxed features: "Generating More Customers for Your Business," "Learn about e-Selling from Chief Marketer and MailChimp," "Are Sales Letters Becoming Extinct? Absolutely Not!," "What Type of Decision Maker Is Your Reader?," "Can Your Sales Message Pass This Test?," "Gaining—and Keeping—Readers' Attention on Facebook and Twitter," "Current Trends in Promotional Writing: A Q&A with a Young PR Professional," "CAN-SPAM: It's the Law," "Web Resources for Proposal Writing."
- New Case Illustrations and exhibits from Scotts Lawn Service, Skillpath Seminars, Delta Airlines, the American Society of Training and Development, and the state government of Vermont (an RFP).
- Incorporation of new media and use of visuals in the discussion of sales messages.
- Over 30 new problem-solving cases (online).

CHAPTER 8

- New boxed features: "How Far Should Your Report Go?," "Report-Writing Tools Help Businesses Succeed," "Managing Citations with Zotero."

- A completely reorganized and updated research section, including over 30 screenshots of online research tools.
- Addition of a wide variety of Web-based resources, a more helpful discussion of library research, a new table of useful library resources, and an updated list of resources organized by research question.
- Expanded discussion of designing a questionnaire.

CHAPTER 9

- New boxed features: "Are Tweets, Blog Comments, and Text Messages Undermining Your Report-Writing Skills?," "When Is a Report not a Report?," "The Monetary Value of a Good Report."
- Removal of audit reports; expanded discussion of progress reports, with a new Case Illustration.
- Over 30 new problem-solving cases, plus a list of 152 general report topics in different functional areas of business (online).

CHAPTER 10

- New boxed features: "Finding Your Professional Voice," "The Art of Negotiation," "What's in a Handshake?," "Virtual Presentations: The Real Thing," "Have You Met TED?," "Look Like a Pro with PowerPoint Keyboard Shortcuts."
- Updated discussion of phone etiquette.
- Current research on the relationship between "digital natives'" (e.g., millennials, Gen-Yers) technology use and the development of their nonverbal communication skills.
- Updated section on "Delivering Web-Based Presentations."

CHAPTER 11

- Discussion of the importance of internships.
- New boxed features: "The Where, What, and Whys of Hiring," "The Most Important Six Seconds in Your Job Search," "Developing a Professional Portfolio," "Answers to the 10 Toughest Interview Questions," "What's the Number One Interviewing Mistake?," "Make Your LinkedIn Profile Work for You," "Web Sites Offer Valuable Interview Advice."
- Discussion in various parts of the chapter on how employers and job seekers use social networking sites in the hiring or job-search process.
- Discussion of the features of print résumés and electronic résumés (e.g., email, scannable, Web-based).

BONUS CHAPTER A

- Discussion of document layout principles.
- Use of Word 2013 screenshots.

BONUS CHAPTER B

- Fifty new practice sentences to build students' skills in the use of pronoun case, pronoun-antecedent agreement, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, and the apostrophe.
- Additional guidelines on pronoun-antecedent agreement.
- New boxed features: "Can You Detect the Difference That Punctuation Makes?," "Good Grammar: Your Ticket to Getting and Keeping a Job."

BONUS CHAPTER C

- Updated discussion of the dimensions of cultural difference.
- Updated list of resources for effective cross-cultural communication.
- Addition of an exercise comparing Japanese and U.S. versions of an email message.

BONUS CHAPTER D

- Improved format for the sample long report.
- Use of Word 2013 screenshots in boxed features.

BONUS CHAPTER E

- Thoroughly updated examples of footnote and bibliography format for different types of sources.
- Use of Word 2013 screenshots in boxed features.

business communication

Communicating in **the Workplace**

chapter one

As Head of Learning & Development for Facebook, Stuart Crabb knows what it takes to be an attractive job candidate and a successful employee. He has over 20 years' experience helping companies hire the right people, develop their talent, and become more culturally diverse.

What does it take to succeed at Facebook? According to Crabb, the answers are "critical thinking," "problem solving," "creativity," and "performance." It also takes being "motivated," "individually accountable," and a "good fit" with the company culture.

These happen to be key traits of successful business communicators, too. They understand that communicating well takes analysis, judgment, and even ingenuity. It takes being attuned to people and to each communication situation. And it takes not only verbal skill but also technological and visual literacy.

Like business itself, business communication can be challenging. But the challenge can be fun, and solving communication problems can bring enormous rewards. This book will help prepare you for an exciting future as both a businessperson and a communicator. ■

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

LO 1-1 Explain the importance of communication to you and to business.

LO 1-2 Describe the main challenges facing business communicators today.

LO 1-3 Describe the three main categories of business communication.

LO 1-4 Describe the formal and informal communication networks of the business organization.

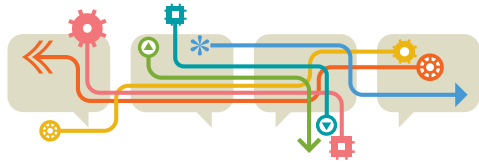
LO 1-5 Describe factors that affect the types and amount of communicating that a business does.

LO 1-6 Explain why business communication is a form of problem solving.

LO 1-7 Describe the contexts for each act of business communication.

LO 1-8 Describe the business communication process.

workplace scenario



Demonstrating Your Value on a High-Profile Team

You were thrilled to be hired a few months ago as a customer service representative for OrgWare.com, a company that sells management software specially designed for professional associations. The software enables organizations like the American Marketing Association and the Association for Business Communication to manage their finances, keep track of their members, schedule events, and much more.

The company is doing well. In 12 years, it has grown from a five-person business into one that employs 120 people. There are now six regional sales teams located across the United States, and there's even a development team in Malaysia. But this growth has created a problem: The extensive face-to-face communication that helped make OrgWare.com a thriving business has, in many cases, become difficult or impossible. As a result, the sense of teamwork in the organization is weakening. And it is clear that phone calls, emails, and instant messaging are not sufficient to keep employees engaged and well informed.

The CEO has formed a task force to find an internal communication solution. Will it be an intranet? An electronic newsletter? A secure social networking site? Virtual meetings? A combination? Which would the employees be most likely to read and use? How should the solution be implemented, and what will it cost?

To your surprise, you were asked to help find the answers. The CEO felt that your familiarity with new media could be an asset to the team. You'll also be expected to represent the customer service area and the viewpoints of young employees like yourself.

Everyone on the team will need to research the pros and cons of different media, acquire employees' opinions, write progress reports, share ideas, and ultimately help present the team's recommendation to the top executives.

Are you ready?

> "Your work in business will involve communication—a lot of it—because communication is a major part of the work of business."

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS

Your work in business will involve communication—a lot of it—because communication is a major part of the work of business. The overview that follows will help you prepare for communication challenges like those described in the Workplace Scenario.

LO 1-1 Explain the importance of communication to you and to business.

The Importance of Communication Skills

Because communication is so important in business, businesses want and need people with good communication skills. Evidence of the importance of communication in business is found in numerous surveys of executives, managers, and recruiters. Without exception, these surveys have found that communication ranks at or near the top of the business skills needed for success.

For example, the 431 managers and executives who participated in a survey about graduates' preparedness for the workforce named "oral communications," "teamwork/collaboration," "professionalism/work ethic," "written communications," and "critical thinking/problem solving" as the top "very important skills" job applicants should have.[1] The employers surveyed for the National Association of Colleges and Employers' *Job Outlook Survey* for 2011 rated "communication" as the most valuable soft skill, with "teamwork skills" and "analytical skills" following closely behind.[2] Why is communication ability so highly valued? As one professional trainer explains, "you will need to request information, discuss problems, give instructions, work in teams, and interact with colleagues and clients" to achieve cooperation and team efficiency. To advance, you'll also need to be able to "think for yourself," "take initiative,"

communication matters

This Just In: What You Can Do Is Even More Important than What You Know

In its latest annual survey of executives, the Association of American Colleges and Universities found that "cross-cutting capacities" like communication skills are now more valued than a particular choice of major. More specifically,

- Nearly all those surveyed (93%) agree that "a candidate's demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major."
- More than nine in ten of those surveyed say it is important that those they hire demonstrate ethical judgment and integrity, intercultural skills, and the capacity for continued new learning.
- More than three in four employers say they want colleges to place more emphasis on helping students develop key learning outcomes, including critical thinking, complex problem solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world settings.

Source: "It Takes More than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success," *Association of American Colleges and Universities*, AAC&U, 10 Apr. 2013, Web, 29 Apr. 2013.

and "solve problems."[3] On the managerial level, you'll find that communication skills are even more essential. In the words of an international business consultant, "nothing puts you in the 'poor leader' category more swiftly than inadequate communication skills."[4]

Unfortunately, businesses' need for employees with strong communication skills is all too often unfulfilled. When NFI Research asked senior executives and managers what areas of their companies they'd most like to see improved, they put "efficiency" and "communication" at the top of the list.[5] According to Solari Communications, "poor communication costs business millions of dollars every single day" in the form of wasted time, misunderstandings, eroded customer loyalty, and lost business.[6] SIS International Research found that poor communication is a problem for small and mid-sized businesses, not just for big corporations. Its data indicated that in 2009 a business with 100 employees spent an average downtime of 17 hours a week on clarifying its communications, which translated into an annual cost of $524,569.[7]

The communication shortcomings of employees and the importance of communication in business explain why you should work to improve your communication skills. Whatever position you have in business, your performance will be judged largely on the basis of your ability to communicate. If you perform and communicate well, you are likely to be rewarded with advancement. And the higher you advance, the more you will need your communication ability. The evidence is clear: Improving your communication skills improves your chances for success in business.

Why Business Depends upon Communication

Every business, even a one-person business, is actually an economic and social system. To produce and sell goods and services, any business must coordinate the activities of many groups of people: employees, suppliers, customers, legal advisors, community representatives, and government agencies that might be involved. These connections are achieved through communication.

Whatever position you have in business, your performance will be judged largely on the basis of your ability to communicate.

Consider, for example, the communications of a pharmaceutical manufacturer. Throughout the company, employees send and receive information about all aspects of the company's business:

- Salespeople receive instructions and information from the home office and submit orders and regular reports of their contact with customers.
- Executives use written and oral messages to conduct business with customers and other companies, manage company operations, and perform strategic planning.
- Production supervisors receive work orders, issue instructions, receive status reports, and submit production summaries.

- Shop floor supervisors deliver orders to the employees on the production line, communicate and enforce guidelines for safety and efficiency, troubleshoot problems that arise, and bring any concerns or suggestions to management.
- Marketing professionals gather market information, propose new directions for company production and sales efforts, coordinate with the research and development staff, and receive direction from the company's executives.
- Research specialists receive or propose problems to investigate, make detailed records of their research, monitor lab operations for compliance with government regulations, and communicate their findings to management.
- Public relations professionals use various media to build the company's brand and maintain the public's trust.

Numerous communication-related activities occur in every other niche of the company as well: finance and accounting, human resources, legal, information systems, and other departments. Everywhere, employees receive and send information as they conduct their work, and they may be doing so across or between continents as well as between buildings or offices.

Oral communication is a major part of this information flow. So, too, are various types of written communication—instant messaging, text messaging, online postings and comments, email, memos, letters, and reports, as well as forms and records.

All of this communicating goes on in business because communication is essential to the organized effort involved in business. Simply put, communication enables human beings to work together.

EXHIBIT 1-1 Increasingly Important Skills in 21st-Century Business

- Media literacy
- Social intelligence
- Cross-cultural competency
- Computational thinking
- Visual literacy
- Interpretive skills
- Ethical reasoning

LO 1-2 Describe the main challenges facing business communicators today.

Current Challenges for Business Communicators

While communication has always been central to business, the nature of work today presents special communication challenges. Here we discuss four interrelated trends that are likely to influence how you will work and communicate.

the need for expanded media literacy When email arrived on the scene in the late 1980s, it created something of a revolution. Instead of being restricted to letters, memos, and printed reports and proposals, business writers could now correspond electronically. As a result, many tasks formerly conducted via printed documents—memos in particular—were performed through email instead, and email replaced many phone and face-to-face conversations as well. Email has also had the effect of speeding up communication and of enabling a communicator to reach many more readers simultaneously. It has increased what we can achieve—and are expected to achieve—each day.

Email is still the most heavily used medium in business, but many other media have appeared on the scene. In addition to instant messaging and text messaging, businesses are now using blogs, tweets, podcasts, social networking, virtual meetings, videos, animation, simulations, and even online games. Collectively referred to as **new media**, these forms of communication and the mobile devices with which people access them are causing another revolution.

The impacts of this change are many and far reaching. It is easy now to network with others, even on the other side of the world, and to tap the intelligence of those outside the boundaries of the organization. Obviously, these "new ways for groups to come together and collaborate" will require that employees be "highly conversant with digital networking and virtual collaboration."[8] But new media are also increasing the need for employees who have **social intelligence**—the ability "to quickly assess the emotions of those around them and adapt their words, tone, and gestures accordingly."[9]

With information coming in so fast and from so many sources, organizations are becoming less hierarchical and more brain-like, with each employee acting as a kind of sensor. As a result, front-line employees now have a higher level of decision-making power than ever before.[10] Performing well in such an environment takes "novel and adaptive thinking,"[11] a willingness to "embrace change," and "fierce problem-solving skills."[12] The approach to business communication that this book takes will help you develop these strengths.

increasing globalism and workplace diversity Countries and cultures continue to grow more interconnected as businesses expand their reach around the world. According to a panelist for a recent webinar on workplace trends, we are seeing "the emergence of the truly globally integrated enterprise," which means that the likelihood of working on a global team is increasing, as is the importance of "global social networks."[13]

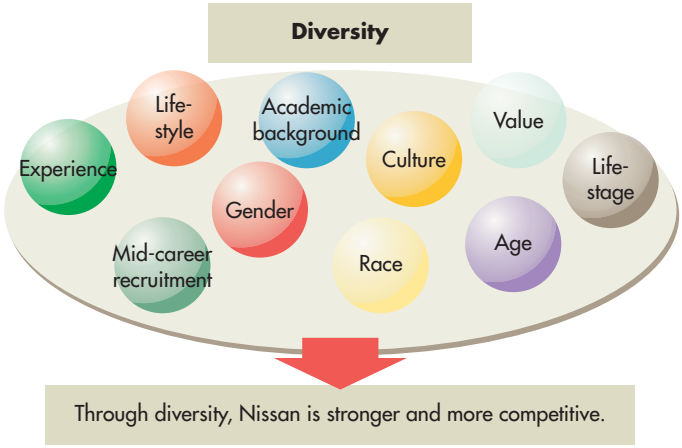
Cross-cultural competency should thus be a part of your skillset.[14] You will need to be aware that your assumptions about business and communication are not shared by everyone everywhere. As Bonus Chapter C explains, businesspeople from other countries may have distinctly different attitudes about

communication matters

Why Companies Promote Workplace Diversity

Diversity programs are becoming widespread. Why? A Web article posted by American Express lists these benefits:

1. **It builds your employer brand.** You can attract better talent from around the world. Also, a company that has a strong diversity program will have a good reputation because it will be seen as having fair employment practices.
2. **It increases creativity.** When you bring a variety of different people from various backgrounds together, you'll end up getting better solutions to business problems.
3. **It encourages personal growth.** Employees, especially younger ones, are striving to use their corporate experience to learn and grow their careers. This is a major advantage to workplace diversity because it can help employees learn new ideas and perspectives and connect intellectually and personally to different people.
4. **It makes employees think more independently.** If you have similar people at a company, it will be harder to solve complex problems. One study by Katherine Phillips, a professor at Kellogg, shows that adding even one employee from a different background can get people out of their comfort zones and thinking differently about a situation.



How a company will define diversity will depend on the company. The visual to the left, from the Nissan Web site, incorporates 10 different types—and you might be able to think of others.

Sources: Dan Schawbel, "Why Diversity Matters in the Workplace," *American Express Open Forum*, American Express Company, 8 Nov. 2012, Web, 28 Apr. 2013; "Diversity," *Nissan,* Nissan Motor Company, n.d., Web, 28 Apr. 2013.

punctuality and efficiency. They can also differ from you in their preference, or lack thereof, for directness and the show of emotion. And the core features of their culture—such as their preference for individualism or collectivism, their religious beliefs, their political environment, their ideas about social hierarchy, and their attitudes toward work itself—can make their view of how to do business quite different from yours.

You will encounter other kinds of diversity as well. To have adequate retirement income, the so-called Baby Boomers—those born soon after World War II—are extending their careers. This means that organizations are likely to have employees in their twenties, in their sixties and seventies, and every age in between.[15] The influx of women into the workplace has meant increased gender diversity. And according to a diversity officer for a major health care firm, each generation of U.S. workers has grown more ethnically diverse, with the so-called Generation Y cohort (those born after 1979) having the most ethnic diversity.[16] This trend is making organizations more innovative and productive,[17] and it means that "cultural agility" will need to figure into your workplace communications.[18] (See the Communication Matters feature above for more about the benefits and types of diversity in the workplace.)

an increased need for strong analytical skills Adapting to a quickly changing business landscape requires being able to assess information quickly, focus on what's relevant, and interpret information reliably and usefully. As data-gathering devices are built into more objects, there will be more numerical data for us to process. The need for **computational thinking**—the ability "to interact with data, see patterns in data, make data-based decisions, and use data to design for desired outcomes"[19]—will increase. So will the need for **visual literacy**, the ability to create and interpret graphics.[20]

The value of **interpretive skills** extends beyond interpreting numbers. As we've pointed out, being able to understand other people is critical. As "smart machines" automate many workplace tasks, employees will spend more time on tasks that require "sense-making," or "the ability to determine the deeper meaning or significance of what is being expressed."[21]

> **"We've got to recognize that the real high-value work … may actually have an *imaginative* component."**

As one expert put it. "We've got to recognize that the real high-value work … may actually have an *imaginative* component."[22] This quality is required to discern the key facts, to explore "what if," and to choose the best solution—all central components of successful business communication.

an increased focus on ethics and social responsibility One more widespread trend under way in business will likely affect the goals of the organization you work for: an increased focus on ethical and socially responsible behavior.

While ethical scandals have plagued businesses throughout modern history, the Enron and WorldCom scandals of 2002, in which false reports of financial health cheated employees and shareholders alike, seemed to usher in a new era of concern. That concern was well founded: With 2008 came unprecedented discoveries of mismanagement and fraud on the part of some of the United States's largest financial institutions. Accounts of predatory lending, business espionage, and exploitative labor practices continue to shake the public's confidence in business. On a moral level, doing business in a way that harms others is wrong. On a practical level, doing so undermines trust, which is critical to the success of business. The more an organization builds trust among its employees, its shareholders, its business partners, and its community, the better for the business and for economic prosperity overall. A key way to build trust is through respectful, honest communication backed up by quality goods and services.

Lately, another important dimension of business ethics has developed: **corporate social responsibility**. The Internet has brought a new transparency to companies' business practices, with negative information traveling quickly and widely. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as CorpWatch, Consumer Federation of America, and Greenpeace can exert a powerful influence on public opinion and even on

Nongovermental organizations (NGOs) such as CorpWatch attest to the growing importance of social responsibility in business.

Source: CorpWatch, Home page, CorpWatch, 1 May 2013, Web, 3 May 2013.

Source: © Randy Glasbergen/glasbergen.com

governments. Businesses now operate in an age of social accountability, and their response has been the development of corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments and initiatives. While the business benefits of CSR have been debated, the public demand for such programs is strong. You may well find that social issues will influence how you do business and communicate in business.

LO 1-3 Describe the three main categories of business communication.

Main Categories of Business Communication

Such newer media as blogs and social networking have weakened the boundary between "inside" and "outside" the organization. One post on a company's blog, for example, could draw comments from its employees, from employees in a similar organization or industry, or from potential customers.

Even so, most communication on the job can still be categorized as either internal operational, external operational, or personal. These categories, while not completely distinct, can help you understand your purposes for communicating.

internal-operational communication All the communication that occurs in conducting work within a business is internal operational. This is the communication among the business's employees that is done to perform the work of the business and track its success.

Internal-operational communication takes many forms. It includes the ongoing discussions that senior management undertakes to determine the goals and processes of the business. It includes the orders and instructions that supervisors give employees, as well as written and oral exchanges among employees about work matters. It includes reports that employees prepare concerning sales, production, inventories, finance, maintenance, and so on. It includes the messages that they write and speak in carrying out their assignments and contributing their ideas to the business.

Much of this internal-operational communication is performed on computer networks. Employees send email, chat online, and post information on company portals and blogs for others throughout the business, whether located down the hall, across the street, or in other countries. And today, much of this communication takes place via smartphones and other mobile devices.

external-operational communication The work-related communicating that a business does with people and groups outside the business is **external-operational communication**. This is the business's communication with suppliers, service companies, customers, government agencies, the general public, and others.

External-operational communication includes all of the business's efforts at selling—from sales letters, emails, and phone calls to Web and television ads, trade-show displays, the company Web site, and customer visits. Also in this category is all that a business does to gain positive publicity, such as promoting its community-service activities, preparing appealing materials for current and prospective investors, writing press releases for the media, and contributing expert insights at professional meetings and on webinars. In fact, every act of communication with an external audience can be regarded as a public-relations message, conveying a certain image of the company. For this reason, all such acts should be undertaken with careful attention to both content and tone.

The importance of these kinds of external-operational communication hardly needs explaining. Because the success of a business depends on its ability to attract and satisfy customers, it must communicate effectively with those customers.

But businesses also depend on one another in the production and distribution of goods and services. Coordinating with contractors, consultants, and suppliers requires skillful communication. In addition, every business must communicate to some extent with a variety of other external parties, such as government agencies and public-interest groups. Some external audiences for today's businesses are illustrated in Exhibit 1-2. Like internal communication, external communication is vital to business success.