



Business Communication

Developing Leaders for a Networked World

Third Edition

Peter W. Cardon

University of Southern California

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BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: DEVELOPING LEADERS FOR A NETWORKED WORLD, THIRD EDITION

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Dedication

To my daughters: Camilla Jean and Audrey Mei. Your Mom and I love spending every day with you. You make me the happiest Dad in the world!

—Peter W. Cardon

About the Author



Courtesy of Peter Cardon

Peter W. Cardon, MBA, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Business Communication at the University of Southern California. He also serves as Academic Director for the MBA for Professionals and Managers program. He teaches a variety of courses in the MBA and undergraduate business programs, including management communication, intercultural communication, and new media and communication. With approximately 50 refereed articles, Pete is an active contributor to the latest research in intercultural communication, social networking, team collaboration, and leadership communication. He is proud to engage in a discipline that helps so many business professionals and students reach career and personal goals.

Pete is an active member of the Association for Business Communication (ABC). He previously served as the president of ABC. He currently serves as an Editorial Review Board member for the *International Journal of Business Communication (IJBC)* and *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly (BPCQ)*.

Prior to joining higher education, Pete worked as a marketing director at an international tourism company that focused on the markets of Brazil, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. Before that position, he was an account manager in a manufacturing company.

Pete is a strong advocate of global business ties. Having worked in China for three years and consulted in and traveled to nearly 50 countries, he has worked extensively with clients, customers, colleagues, and other partners across the world. To help students develop global leadership skills, he has led student groups on company tours and humanitarian projects to mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, South Korea, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic.

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Available only at www.mcgrawhillcreate.com/cardon or in the e-book within McGraw-Hill Connect[®].

Bonus Chapter Crisis Communications and Public Relations Messages BC-1

Bonus Appendix Creating Proposals and Business Plans BA-1

Developing Leaders for a Networked World



Welcome to the third edition of *Business Communication*. This learning program develops leaders for a networked world. Through the author's **practitioner and case-based approach**, students are more likely to read and reflect on the text. They are better positioned to understand why **credibility** is essential to efficient and effective business communication in today's rapidly changing business communication environment. Cardon's integrated solution, including the **results-driven technology** and content, provides a contemporary yet traditional view into the business communication field, allowing instructors to teach bedrock communication principles while also staying up to date with cultural and **technological** changes. Students are empowered to build strong relationships through effective writing, master foundation concepts, and practice their communication skills anytime and anywhere—transforming them into leaders for a networked world.

The content of this textbook is organized around the traditional business communication topics such as routine messages, persuasive messages, bad-news messages, reports, and presentations. Beyond the basics, it adds unique and modern topics that instructors want and need in their courses.

Credibility

Since professional success depends on managing and working within professional relationships, this textbook uses credibility or trust as a central principle throughout. Principles of relationship-building such as personal credibility, emotional intelligence, and listening hold a prominent role throughout the book. This product begins with a discussion of credibility and refers to it throughout the book.

Effective Writing Builds Relationships

Effective writing in the workplace is essential to building connections and a professional brand. Cardon's three-stage writing process drives excellence in critical thinking, collaboration, and productivity in work relationships. With more examples of internal messages, Cardon develops the skills used early in a career.

Enhanced Coverage of Technology

This book adopts a more visionary and reliable view of the communication technologies of tomorrow. While nearly all textbooks refer to use of social media, they focus on a thin slice of social media activities that involve marketing and customer relations. This book, by contrast, takes a larger view of social media use that includes team communication and communication with external partners. It prepares students for communication in the evolving workplace that involves truly networked communication. Cardon also addresses the need for students to develop an online professional persona that builds personal credibility.





Business Focus

The business case–based approach allows students to learn how communications can build rich and productive relationships between professionals. Each chapter opens with a short business case and, unlike any other product on the market, weaves examples from the case throughout the chapter and into the model documents, engaging readers in the story behind each business message.

Forward-Looking Vision Built on Tradition

The book stays true to core business communication principles established over many decades. Yet it also goes beyond traditional coverage by its inclusion of the latest communication practices facilitated by communication technologies and its enhanced coverage of increasingly important business communication topics such as:

Interpersonal communication (Chapters 2, 3, and 4), social media and technology (Chapters 7 and 8), crisis communication and public relations (Bonus Chapter), oral communication (throughout the book), and business plans and business proposals (Bonus Appendix).

Why Does This Matter?

Each chapter begins with a section that states the compelling reasons the content is crucial to career success. These first few paragraphs are intended to gain buy-in among students. A QR code located at the beginning of these sections allows students to view a short video clip of the author reinforcing this message.

Chapter Takeaways

The chapter takeaway is provided in a visual format. With graphics and lists, it quickly engages students with key chapter content and serves as a reference for applying the principles to their oral and written communication.

Learning Exercises

Each chapter contains a multitude of engaging learning exercises. These exercises are organized into discussion exercises, evaluation exercises, application exercises, and language and mechanics check to help students develop expertise in business communication.



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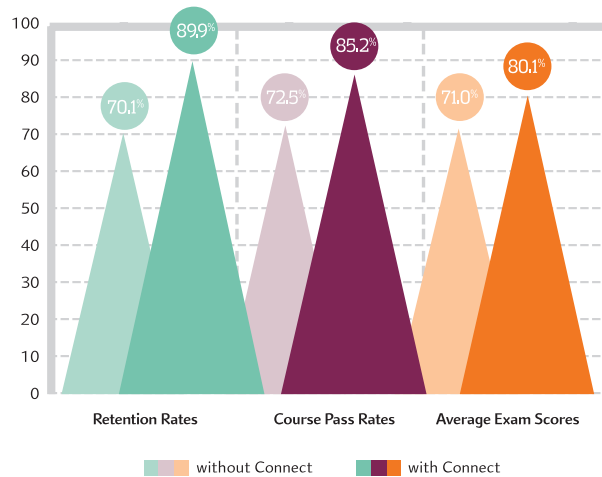
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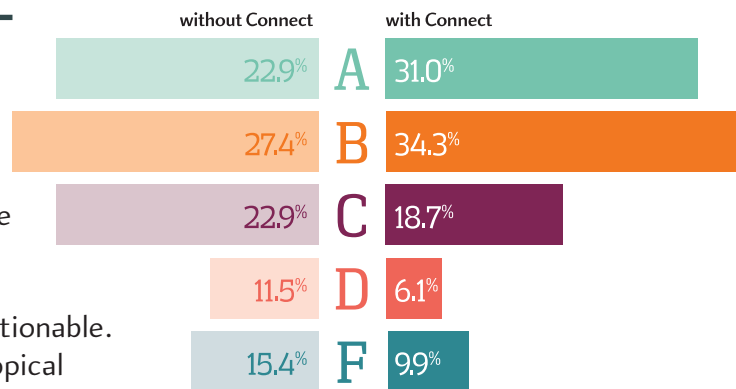
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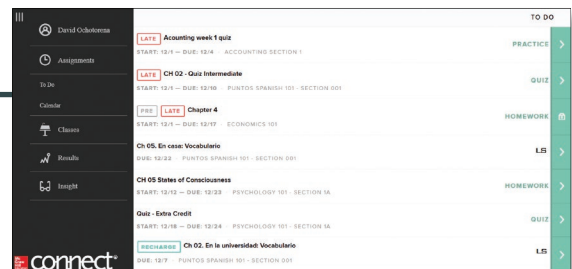
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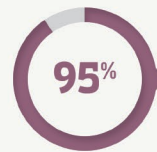
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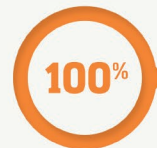
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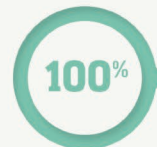
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Grammar and Mechanics

LearnSmart Achieve

Put responsible writing into practice. LearnSmart Achieve develops and improves editing and business writing skills. This adaptive learning system helps students learn faster, study more efficiently, and retain more knowledge for greater success. Visit bit.ly/meetLSAchieve for a walkthrough.

Grammar Quizzes

Students may not think grammar and mechanics are the most exciting topics, but they need to master the basics. Our grammar quizzes within Connect assess students' grammar and mechanics. With a total of 150 auto-graded questions, these are great to use as pre- and post-tests in your courses.

Application

Presentation Capture

Skill practice inside and outside the classroom. Presentation Capture gives instructors the ability to evaluate presentations and students the freedom to practice their presentation skills anytime and anywhere. With its fully customizable rubrics, instructors can measure students' uploaded presentations against course outcome and give students specific feedback on where improvement is needed.

Application Exercises

Each chapter contains exercises that allow students to

- Apply concepts to real-world video cases.
- Analyze a case and apply chapter concepts.
- Quiz knowledge on grammar and usage.
- Demonstrate problem-solving skills through complex examples and diagrams.
- Assess student's values, skills, and interests via self-assessments.
- Demonstrate knowledge about business models and processes.

Students receive immediate feedback and can track their progress in their own report. Detailed results let instructors see at a glance how each student performs and easily track the progress of every student in their course.

Keeping Up with What's New



The third edition of *Business Communication: Developing Leaders for a Networked World* continues to provide results-driven, technology-focused, case-based, and forward-looking content to help business students develop professional credibility for the workplace of tomorrow.

In an increasingly networked world, students will need better interpersonal skills than ever before; they will need better team skills than ever before; they will need better writing skills, especially adapted to new technologies; and they will need stronger presentation skills. This third edition contains the following changes to help students succeed:

Chapter 1 (Credibility)

- The FAIR model of ethical business communication has been expanded with more clarification in text, a current example in the business world (Apple), and several end-of-chapter exercises.
- The *caring* section now includes content about givers and takers. This is based on Adam Grant's work, which has received significant attention in academic circles and business popular press during the past few years.

Chapters 2 and 3 (Interpersonal and Team Communication)

- Additional content about a *giver-versus-taker* mentality is included in the emotional intelligence section.
- A section on short-term teams and quick trust is added to help student teams perform better.
- Personality differences (based on the motivational values model) are included in sections about team dynamics and team effectiveness.
- A *getting-to-know-you* exercise is added to help student teams learn about each other and function more effectively in teams.

Chapter 4 (Intercultural Communication)

- A section on generational differences is added with related end-of-chapter exercises.
- A section on gender differences is added with related end-of-chapter exercises.

Chapters 5 and 6 (The Writing Process)

- The AIM planning model has been visually updated to make the concepts of audience, information, and message more recognizable throughout the book.
- The examples are updated, and additional end-of-chapter exercises are provided.

Chapters 7 and 8 (Technology and Communication)

- The sections on instant messaging and phone conversations are updated.
- The sections on social collaboration tools are updated and expanded.
- A new section about using social tools for learning and developing professional expertise is added.
- The section about managing an online professional reputation is expanded with an additional focus on LinkedIn.

Chapters 9, 10, and 11 (Business Messages: Routine, Persuasive, and Bad-News Messages)

- Examples of all types of messages are updated.
- Additional exercises are added at the end of each chapter, including a new case for each chapter.

Chapters 12 and 13 (Business Reports and Proposals)

- Examples of reports are revised and updated.
- Additional exercises are added at the end of each chapter, including a new case.

Chapters 14 and 15 (Presentations)

- Examples are updated in each chapter.
- Additional exercises are added, including a new case.

Chapter 16 (Employment Communication)

- A new section about using LinkedIn strategically is provided.
- Examples of résumés are updated.
- Additional exercises are added, including a new case.



Thank you to all the reviewers and other business communication instructors who gave advice for the third edition. I've made dozens of changes and updates to meet the needs of today's business students based on the recommendations of these reviewers and advisory board members. Each of these instructors is at the forefront of best practices in business communication. Again, I express my appreciation for their advice and time to help improve this learning program. A special thank you to Jennifer Loney and Suzanne Buck for their ongoing support.

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I extend my deepest thanks to the many business leaders and professionals, business communication scholars and instructors, and colleagues and friends who have contributed their valuable ideas. I especially appreciate the efforts of reviewers and other colleagues

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Bonus Content

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Bonus Chapter Crisis Communications and Public
Relations Messages BC-1

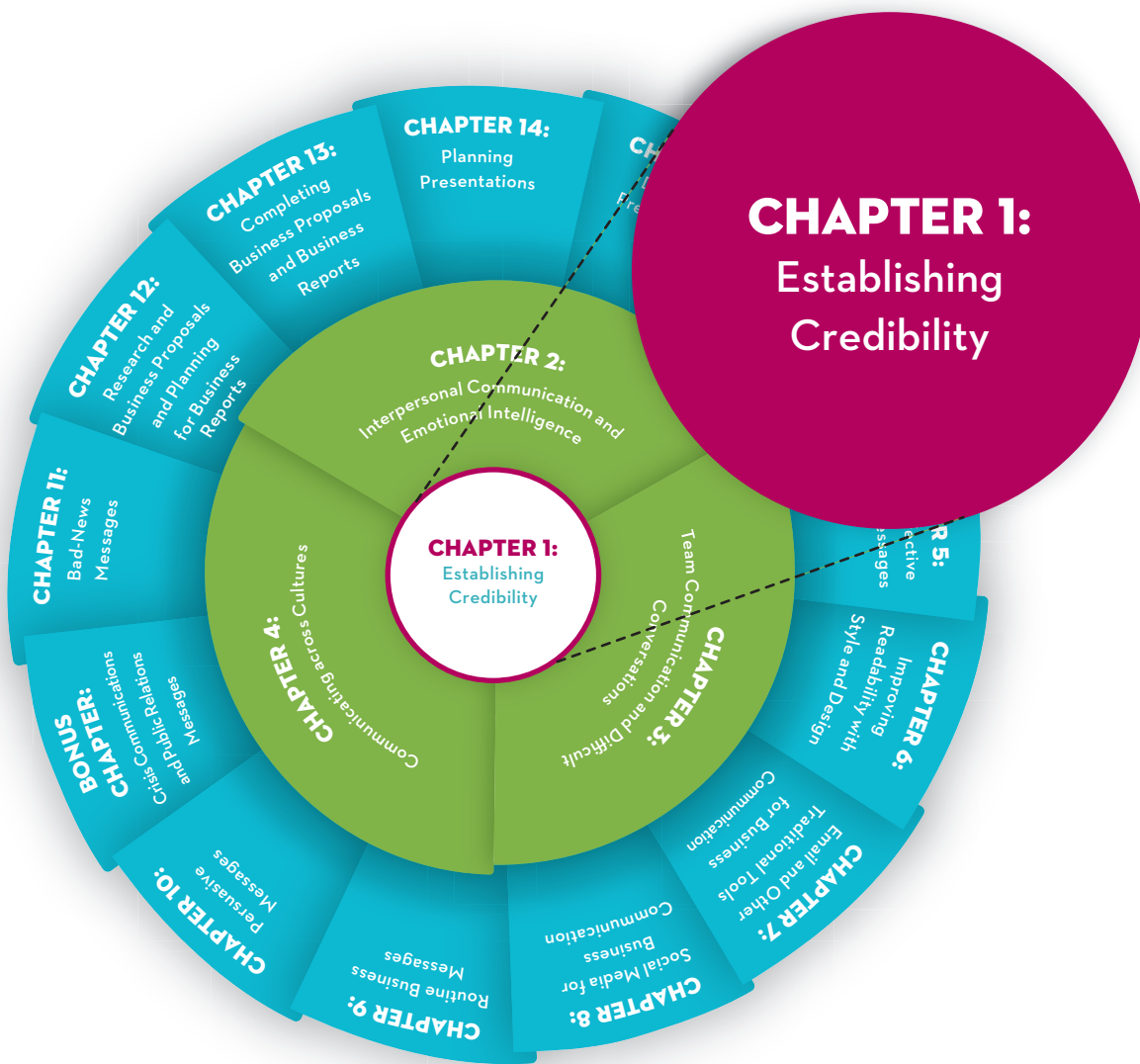
Bonus Appendix Creating Proposals and Business
Plans BA-1

Introduction to Business Communication

Chapter 1 — Establishing Credibility



PART
ONE



ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY



PRINCIPLES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION



PRINCIPLES FOR & TYPES OF BUSINESS MESSAGES



Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>LO1.1 Explain the importance of establishing credibility for business communications.</p> <p>LO1.2 Describe how competence, caring, and character affect your credibility as a communicator.</p> | <p>LO1.3 Define and explain business ethics, corporate values, and personal values.</p> <p>LO1.4 Explain the FAIR approach to ethical business communications.</p> |
|---|--|



WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

In most business situations, others make judgments about what you say, write, and do based on your credibility. **Credibility** is your reputation for being trustworthy—trustworthy to perform your work with excellence; to care about those you work with and for; to live by high ethical, corporate, and personal values; and to deliver on your promises. In short, your credibility is the degree to which others believe or trust in you. In this book, we often use the terms *trust* and *credibility* interchangeably.

Business communications occur in the context of working relationships, all of which depend on trust.¹ Credibility has always been important to business relationships, yet its importance has grown in recent years with an increasingly interdependent, knowledge-based workplace.² As one of the foremost thinkers on trust in the workplace, Stephen M. R. Covey made this observation:

Contrary to what most people believe, trust is not some soft, illusive quality that you either have or you don't; rather, trust is a pragmatic, tangible, actionable asset that you can create—much faster than you probably think possible. . . . It is the key leadership competency of the new global economy.³

The importance of credibility as a basis for effective communication is universal. As Victor K. Fung, chairman of the Li and Fung Group centered in Hong Kong, China, stated, “A good leader is probably no different in any culture in the sense that a good leader must have credibility. That is something one establishes . . . based on the way one handles [oneself] . . . and by [an] established track record.”⁴ Fung’s comments illustrate an important point that we will explore in detail: Credibility emerges from several sources, including abilities and achievements as well as interpersonal skills and traits.

In this chapter, we discuss the ways that business executives and the business community establish trust. Then, we focus on three components of credibility: competence, caring, and character.⁵ First, however, you will read a short scenario about choosing a mentor. Each potential mentor has credibility but for different reasons.

Hear Pete Cardon explain why this matters.



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LO1.1 Explain the importance of establishing credibility for business communications.

CHAPTER CASE: WHOM DO YOU TRUST AS YOUR MENTOR?



WHO'S INVOLVED

Luis



Sally



Tom



THE SITUATION

Assume you were hired about a month ago. Your company has a practice of assigning a mentor to new employees during their first six months. You've been told that mentors can have a major impact on your opportunities: your team assignments, your projects, and your overall career development. You've gotten to know

(Luis character): © Siri Stafford/Getty Images; (Sally character): © Xi Xin Xing/Getty Images; (Tom character): © Sam Edwards/AGE Fotostock

some of your new colleagues, and your boss has asked you which one you would like to be your mentor. Read through your impressions of your colleagues below, and consider who would make the best mentor for you.

LUIS

Luis has worked at your company for one year. Everyone enjoys working with him. He is always cheerful and happy to see those around him. He consistently finds out what his colleagues need and goes out of his way to help out. Everyone thinks Luis is fun. He likes to go out for a drink after work and gets everyone laughing. Luis is well known for being well connected within your company. One thing that every colleague says about him is that he's honest. He continues to make some rookie mistakes, however, and he has done sloppy work several times when he was up against tight deadlines.

SALLY

Sally has worked at your company for three years. She has a reputation of being a star performer. In fact, she's generally assigned the most important projects for that reason. Colleagues know that when she promises something, she makes it happen. A lot of colleagues think she's excessively critical of others when they fall short of her expectations. A colleague complained to one of the managers, "Sally never gives me a chance to develop my skills. She just takes over the project."

TOM

Tom has worked at your company for four years. He consistently receives excellent ratings on his quarterly performance reviews. He is intensely loyal to his team members, and he does everything he can to make sure they succeed. Recently, one of his team members lost a client because she missed several deadlines. When Tom's boss asked why they lost the client, Tom protected his teammate by saying that the client preferred the services of a competitor.

TASK

Luis, Sally, and Tom are like most people—they have some strengths and some weaknesses. As you read this chapter, you will find that each of them lacks complete credibility but for different reasons. Now, choose your mentor. Whom do you trust to help you succeed in your new position?

The Role of Trust in the Post-Trust Era

Do you operate from a position of trust or credibility? That is one of the first things you should consider as you communicate. In the business world, you often start from a deficit of trust. As a result, one of your first goals should be to gain trust or credibility from colleagues, clients, customers, and other contacts.⁶

Given the major business scandals over the past decade (i.e., Enron, Adelphia Communications, WorldCom), trust in businesses and business executives has dropped to all-time lows. As depicted in Figure 1.1, the trust extended by the general public to business executives is far lower than the trust extended to members of other selected professions.⁷

The public also increasingly views companies with less trust. Approximately 85 percent of senior executives surveyed believe that public trust in business has gone down. Approximately 62 percent of survey respondents across 20 countries said their trust in corporations had gone down following the economic crises of 2008 and 2009.⁸

A deficit of trust also exists within companies. Various surveys show that employees often do not trust their own business leaders. Just 51 percent of employees trust senior management, and only 36 percent of employees believe their company leaders act with honesty and integrity. Furthermore, approximately 76 percent of employees have seen illegal or unethical conduct in the past 12 months at their jobs.⁹ As future

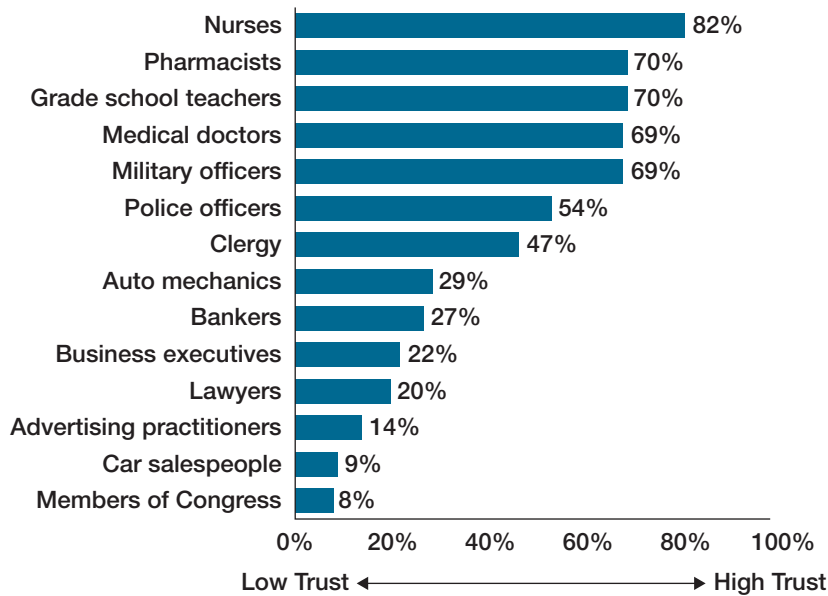


FIGURE 1.1

How Will You Overcome Public Perceptions to Build Credibility?

A Look at Trust in Various Professions

Note: Based on the percentage of American adults who considered members of these occupations "very high" or "high" in honesty and ethical standards in a November 2013 Gallup poll. Available at www.gallup.com/poll/166298/honesty-ethics-rating-clergy-slides-new-low.aspx.

business managers and leaders, you will often find yourself in charge of employees who are accustomed to not trusting those in leadership positions.

A strong predictor of cheating in the workplace is cheating in school. Sadly, recent research has found that cheating is so pervasive that some use the label a *global cheating culture*. Among high school students, 80 percent of high-performing students admit to having cheated, and 50 percent do not believe cheating is wrong. Other research about high school students found that more than 70 percent had engaged in serious cheating, and 50 percent had plagiarized assignments from the Internet. In a study of more than 50,000 undergraduate students in the United States, more than 70 percent admitted to serious cheating. Nearly 80 percent stated that Internet plagiarism was not a serious offense.¹⁰

Perhaps most concerning is that business students are among the worst offenders. When asked in anonymous surveys if they had cheated to get into graduate school, many students admitted to having done so: 43 percent of liberal arts students, 52 percent of education students, 63 percent of medical students, 63 percent of law students, and 75 percent of business students. Think about that! Three-quarters of graduate-level business students admitted to some form of cheating to get into their programs. In another study involving hypothetical ethical dilemmas, convicts in minimum-security prisons scored as high on unethical behavior as MBA students.¹¹ In yet another study of 6,226 undergraduate business students in 36 countries, American business students viewed cheating no differently than did students from countries considered high in corruption.¹²

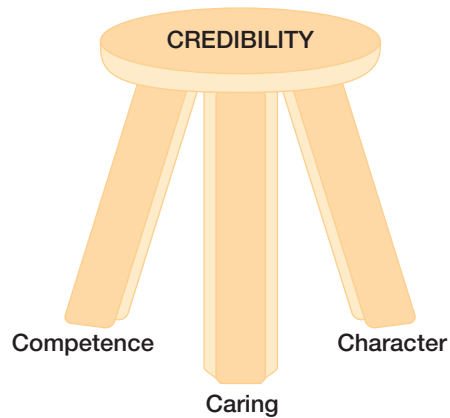
Michael Maslansky, a leading corporate communications expert, has labeled this the post-trust era. In the **post-trust era**, the public overwhelmingly views businesses as operating against the public's best interests, and the majority of employees view their leaders and colleagues skeptically. Regarding the post-trust era, Maslansky said, "Just a few years ago, salespeople, corporate leaders, marketing departments, and communicators like me had it pretty easy. We looked at communication as a relatively linear process. . . . But trust disappeared, things changed."¹³

Most of these perceptions about business leaders as untrustworthy are not necessarily fair. Daniel Janssen, former chairman of the board of directors of Solvay (a Belgian chemicals company operating in more than 50 countries), explained the dilemma:

Executives of large companies today are generally perceived as efficient and competent, but also self-interested and ungenerous. However, I think that people who form this opinion are underestimating something of which they lack knowledge. Many executives, in top management and also at other levels, are incredibly generous and not at all self-interested. They do their job and they do it with respect for the common interest. But it is true that capitalism is too often marked by its dark and greedy side.¹⁴

FIGURE 1.2

The Three Components of Credibility



You will often find yourself needing to establish credibility in this post-trust era. As a future manager and executive, you can control your reputation as a credible communicator by focusing on three well-established factors: competence, caring, and character. Research has shown that these three factors almost entirely account for whether a person is considered credible in professional situations. As depicted in Figure 1.2, credibility is like a three-legged stool. Without any one element, it is compromised.

The Role of Competence in Establishing Credibility

LO1.2 Describe how competence, caring, and character affect your credibility as a communicator.



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Competence refers to the knowledge and skills needed to accomplish business tasks, approach business problems, and get a job done. Most people will judge your competence based on your track record of success and achievement.

In her memoir, Meg Whitman, current CEO of HP, explains how as a young professional she gained credibility and displayed competence within her organization: “I just focused on delivering results,” she said. “You have to excel at the tasks you’re given and you have to add value to every single project, every conversation where someone seeks your input.”¹⁵

People develop competence in many ways: through study, observation, and, most important, practice and real-world business experiences. Your entire business program is likely centered on developing competence in a certain business discipline and/or industry. You may already have significant business experience. If you’re a novice, seeking internships and jobs related to your discipline will help you develop competence.

How you communicate directly affects the perceptions others have of your competence. Throughout this book, you will find an emphasis on two traits associated with competence: a focus on action and an emphasis on results.

A *focus on action* implies that you seize business opportunities. Meg Whitman emphasized this action-oriented approach to work: “The way I usually put it is, the price of inaction is far greater than the cost of making a mistake. You do not have to be perfect to be an effective leader, but you cannot be timid.”¹⁶ She also described an *emphasis on results*:

I don’t believe that all a company needs to do is declare that it has values and then say, “Trust us, we know what’s best.” To be a success, you must identify a goal with a measurable outcome, and you must hit that goal—every day, every month, every year. Trying is important. But trying is not the same as achieving success. . . . [Some] people expect to advance in their careers regardless of results and are surprised when it doesn’t happen. They feel entitled. Their attitude is: “Because I’m here, because I’m me, you owe me.”¹⁷

In the opening scenario in which you chose a mentor, Luis is weakest in competence. While he is strong at caring for others and displaying good character, many people will question his ability to accomplish tasks well. He has less experience than his colleagues and sometimes performs sloppy work. Yet, many people would choose him as their mentor because they trust his ability to find out about their career needs and trust he knows how to connect them to others in the company.

In summary, you demonstrate competence by taking an active role in your business and by getting results. How you communicate your plan of action and the results of those actions will determine how others perceive your competence and your credibility.

The Role of Caring in Establishing Credibility

Your colleagues, clients, and even your customers will trust you far more if they know you care about them. As Mahatma Gandhi once stated, “The moment there is suspicion about a person’s motives, everything he does becomes tainted.” This statement applies in nearly all business circumstances: People distrust individuals who are perceived as unconcerned about the interests of others or disinterested in causes above and beyond themselves. In the business world, **caring** implies understanding the interests of others, cultivating a sense of community, and giving to others and showing generosity. In the past, caring was seldom discussed as integral to business. Now, it is among the most important abilities for business leaders and managers. In fact, a recent study of business managers found that caring is considered among the top 3 skills or abilities (from a list of 18 skills or abilities) for managers of nearly any business discipline.¹⁸

Understanding the Interests of Others

Meg Whitman, when she was CEO of eBay, observed how important recognizing the needs of others is. She explained:

Connecting with people’s hopes and dreams is a dynamic I perceived in the eBay community. Both buyers and sellers so often loved eBay because it connected them to their aspirations—perhaps the desire of amassing a great collection, or the dream of financial stability from successfully building an online business.¹⁹

Your ability to gain credibility strongly depends on your ability to show that you care for the needs of others. Furthermore, your ability to show you care puts you in a rare position as a business leader. After all, less than half (42 percent) of employees believe their managers care about them. Even worse, less than one-third (29 percent) of employees believe their managers care about whether they develop skills.²⁰

Effective communicators gain trust by connecting with others—that is, seeking to understand others’ needs, wants, opinions, feelings, and aspirations. Virtually every aspect of communication you will focus on in this book relies on this other-orientation.

Cultivating a Sense of Community

The most effective business leaders in today’s corporate environment have generally risen to their positions because of their sense of community and teamwork. Meredith Ashby and Stephen Miles recently interviewed hundreds of prominent and accomplished business leaders to answer questions such as *What are the burning issues for corporate leaders today?* and *How do companies identify, attract, develop, and retain the best and brightest people in the workplace?* Here is what they learned from these CEOs:

Most defined their main responsibility as chief executive to be that of inspiring, influencing, setting the direction for, facilitating, coaching, mentoring, and developing their employees. The word “control” was rarely used; instead, they spoke emphatically

about the importance of a strong team orientation. Their role was to identify and empower a team, not command it. Indeed, many of them characteristically used the term “we” rather than “I” in discussing success within the organization. Instead of thinking in terms of individual accomplishment, most tended to think in terms of what their management teams had achieved.²¹

Throughout this textbook, you will see techniques for communicating your “we” and “you” orientation rather than a “me” orientation. Speaking about “our needs” or “your needs” as opposed to “my needs” engenders trust and helps you come up with solutions that achieve mutual benefit.

Giving to Others and Showing Generosity

Recent research has shown that most professionals can broadly be characterized as *givers* and *takers*. Givers are those professionals who go out of their way to help colleagues, respond to their requests and needs, and generously support others in the workplace. Takers are those professionals who frequently ask for favors from colleagues yet infrequently volunteer to help their peers in return.

Dozens of studies in recent years show that organizations with more generous and giving employees perform better. Companies with higher percentages of givers achieve higher profitability, higher productivity, and higher customer satisfaction. In addition, these companies experience lower employee turnover rates. These studies also show that givers are more likely than takers to be rated as top performers. (However, givers are also more likely than takers to be rated the lowest performing employees. In Chapter 2, you’ll learn more about strategies to be a giver *and* maintain top performance.)²² Particularly early in your career, you’ll find that gaining a reputation for helping your colleagues will open up many professional opportunities and enhance your professional credibility.

In the opening scenario, Sally is weakest in caring. While she is strong at getting the job done and communicating honestly, she often does not seem to act in the best interests of others. She may even be indifferent to the growth of her colleagues. Yet, many people would choose her as a mentor because they could learn from the best and likely participate on the most important projects.

The Role of Character in Establishing Credibility

Character refers to a reputation for staying true to commitments made to stakeholders and adhering to high moral and ethical values. Character has always been important in business relationships, especially long-term, collaborative relationships. It is becoming even more important—especially for leaders—in an increasingly open, transparent, connected, and interdependent workplace. David Pottruck, chairman of HighTower Advisors, explained it this way:

The twenty-first-century leader is surely different from the leaders of the last two decades. The Internet has placed real power in the hands of people around the world. It has increased the possibilities for millions to do the work that enlivens them. There will be little loyalty to people or to organizations that are not worthy. No longer do pension plans and benefits create chains that hold people in one spot. To create loyalty in such an environment, the new leader will understand how to create a compelling culture, one that will allow people to contribute their best. He or she will then communicate meaning and trustworthiness in every word and action. Culture, character, and communication are the cornerstones of today’s new leadership.²³

Character is central in creating trust. Consider the recent research, depicted in Figure 1.3.²⁴ Business executives were asked what the most important determinants of trust in workplace projects were. Overwhelmingly, character-based traits—that is, honesty, ethical behavior, and willingness to exchange information—ranked at the top.

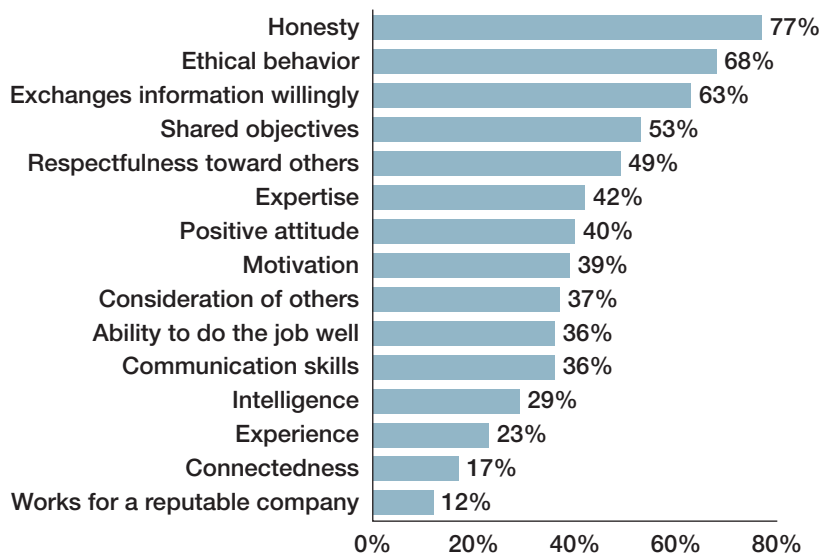


FIGURE 1.3

What Determines Trust in Individuals in the Workplace?

For Collaboration on Workplace Projects

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

In the following sections, we focus on several topics closely related to character: business ethics, corporate and personal values, open and honest communication, a stakeholder view of accountability, and fairness in business communication.

Business Ethics

Ethics are “rules of conduct or moral principles that guide individual or group behavior.”²⁵ **Business ethics** are the commonly accepted beliefs and principles in the business community for acceptable behavior. At a minimum, business ethics involve adhering to laws; safeguarding confidential or proprietary information; avoiding conflicts of interest and misuse of company assets; and refraining from accepting or providing inappropriate gifts, gratuities, and entertainment.²⁶

As far as corporate communications, the dominant business ethic in recent years is transparency. **Transparency** involves sharing all relevant information with stakeholders. As defined by Transparency International, transparency “is a principle that allows those affected by administrative decisions, business transactions or charitable work to know not only the basic facts and figures but also the mechanisms and processes. It is the duty of civil servants, managers and trustees to act visibly, predictably and understandably.”²⁷

In recent years, perhaps in large part due to public scandals, employees of companies in the United States have observed higher ethical behavior within their companies and generally view their upper managers as ethical. For example, in a recent Ethics Resource Center survey of 3,010 employees across the United States, 80 percent of employees said they were satisfied with the information they received from top management about what was going on in the company, 74 percent trusted that top management would keep its promises and commitments, and 89 percent stated that top management actively encouraged employees to do the right thing. Furthermore, 82 percent of employees believed that top managers would be punished and held accountable if they were caught violating the organization’s ethical standards.²⁸ For the foreseeable future, transparency is expected to remain the dominant business ethic related to communications.

You will soon be in leadership positions within your organization. You can create a transparent workplace by being accessible, acknowledging the concerns of others, and following through when you don’t have immediate answers. Trust-building behaviors include extending trust, sharing information, telling it straight, providing opportunities, admitting mistakes, and setting a good example by following rules.²⁹

LO1.3 Define and explain



business ethics,
corporate values,
and personal
values.

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